

How Arabella Lawrence’s sister Sarah introduced William Rowan Hamilton to Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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Revised and extended 2022

Abstract

In 1825 the Irish mathematician Sir William Rowan Hamilton befriended Miss Arabella Lawrence, the third of five sisters who ran a girls’ school in Liverpool. Hamilton’s biographer Robert Perceval Graves made a small mistake when introducing the Lawrence sisters; he called Arabella the ‘eldest sister’ instead of the third. Because it is known that the eldest Lawrence sister had been a friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Graves’ otherwise unimportant error led biographers to the erroneous conclusion that Arabella had been Coleridge’s friend, instead of Sarah, her eldest sister. In 2008 this confusion in turn led to the unfounded and unproven statement that Hamilton had used his friendship with Arabella to procure a letter of introduction to Coleridge without being honest about it, thereafter however claiming that he had received the introduction unexpectedly. It will be shown here that the friendship between Hamilton and Arabella Lawrence was a very truthful one, and that such behaviour would have been very out-of-character for Hamilton; that the circumstances in Hamilton’s life at that time were very different from what was suggested; that there were far more easy ways for him to obtain an introduction to Coleridge; that, consequently, there is not any reason to doubt Hamilton’s claim that he received the introduction unexpectedly.

1 Introduction

Even apparently insignificant errors can contribute to erroneous historical conclusions. In the case of the famous Irish mathematician Sir William Rowan Hamilton (1805-1865) that happened with a letter of introduction to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), which was given to him by Miss Sarah Lawrence (1780-1859) from Liverpool in March 1832. The small mistake was made by Robert Perceval Graves (1810-1893) in his enormous biography of Hamilton which was published in the 1880s, when he introduced the friendship between Hamilton and Miss Arabella Lawrence (1787-1873), a younger sister of Sarah Lawrence.

Hamilton and Arabella Lawrence most likely became friends in 1825, in Edgeworthstown at the home of the novelist and essayist Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849),¹ to whom Hamilton had been introduced in August 1824 by the then vicar of Trim, Robert Butler (1794-1862).² From the summer of 1808, when he was almost three years old, Hamilton had lived in Trim with his uncle James (1776-1847) and aunt Jane Sydney Hamilton (1779-1814) to be educated; Uncle James was curate of Trim and schoolmaster of the diocesan school, and Aunt Sydney mastered Latin and Hebrew. They were the only living brother and the only sister of Hamilton’s father Archibald Hamilton (1778-1819) and lived in “St. Mary’s” or Talbot’s Castle, which also housed the school. Aunt Sydney died in October 1814,³ when Hamilton had just turned nine.

In February 1814 Uncle James had married Elizabeth Boyle (1791/1792-1848), and in 1819 Robert Butler became vicar of Trim. In 1826 Butler married one of Maria’s half-sisters, Harriet

¹ [Graves 1882, 191], [Maria Edgeworth]. Note: all webpages referred to in this article, except those on the large archival websites, have been saved at the [WayBackMachine](#) as 2019-2022 snapshots.

² [Graves 1882, 161]

³ Talbot’s Castle may have been a part of [St. Mary’s Abbey](#). Aunt Sydney had been taken care of by Hamilton’s parents in Dublin [Graves 1882, 27], one of the many indications of the close contacts between these families.

Edgeworth (1801-1889), who after her husband's death in 1862 wrote in her *Memoirs* that "for seven years when not otherwise engaged, Mr. Butler spent his evenings with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton and their children at St. Mary's,"⁴ which of course included Hamilton. In August 1824, when Hamilton just had turned nineteen, Butler took him with him on a visit to his sister-in-law Maria Edgeworth, who at once became very fond of him.⁵

The friendship between Hamilton and Arabella Lawrence started in the year in which Hamilton became twenty and Arabella thirty-eight. Graves introduced the friendship writing,

It was some time in the course of [1825] that Hamilton made acquaintance with Miss Lawrence, the eldest of three sisters who kept a girls' school at the Grange, near Liverpool. It seems likely that she was on a visit to Miss Edgeworth, and that the mutual introduction took place through her. [...] This lady became to Hamilton, for some years, a valuable friend and adviser, as letters from her still in existence amply prove. He visited her and her sisters more than once, and to them he was indebted for an introduction to the elder Coleridge.⁶

Graves' only mistake was that he called Hamilton's friend Arabella "the eldest of three sisters" instead of "the third of five sisters," yet not mentioning the sisters' first names made it very difficult to notice.⁷

Sarah Lawrence, the eldest Lawrence sister, was principal of a girls' school in Liverpool which she ran together with her four younger sisters, Mary (1783-1861), Arabella, Jane (1788-1842), and Harriet (1789-1863).⁸ Next to principal of the school Sarah had been governess to the family of Peter (1760-1833) and Mary Crompton (1759/1760-1840).⁹ In her younger years she had been a friend of Coleridge,¹⁰ whom she met in any case in 1808 and 1812¹¹ at the Crompton's house, Eton House at Wavertree near Liverpool, yet she may have met him earlier.¹²

In 2008 Waka Ishikura published an article in *The Coleridge Bulletin*, in which she, following Graves' mistake of calling Hamilton's friend the "eldest" sister, erroneously assumed that Arabella Lawrence had been governess with the Cromptons, instead of Sarah. Ishikura wrote,

Arabella Lawrence was a former governess in the Crompton family, and Dr Crompton was an early supporter of Coleridge's plan of establishing a school for young people in some of the growing industrial cities in 1796. In those years, Coleridge's esteem for the Cromptons was so high that he remarked that "Mrs Crompton is an Angel: & Dr Crompton a truly honest & benevolent man."¹³

It will be shown hereafter that the fact that Graves did not know that instead of Hamilton's friend Arabella her sister Sarah was the eldest Lawrence sister, unfortunately led to a new addition to Hamilton's already severely damaged reputation;¹⁴ that he would have used his friendship with Arabella Lawrence to obtain an introduction to Coleridge, and had not been honest about it to both Arabella and his sister Eliza Mary Hamilton (1807-1851).

⁴ See p. 17 of *A memoir of the Very Rev. Richard Butler, by his widow*. The "seven years" lasted from Butler's arrival in Trim in 1819 until their marriage in 1826. In early 1826 the Hamiltons had [five living children](#).

⁵ [Graves 1882, 161]

⁶ [Graves 1882, 191]

⁷ Graves will not have known the Lawrence sisters personally. Born in 1810, he met Hamilton when his eldest brother John (1806-1870) befriended Hamilton at college, in the latter half of 1823. Graves himself seems to have befriended Hamilton in 1829 [Weerden, van, 2017, 81].

⁸ [Watts 1998, 55]. Dates of birth and death of the Lawrence family can be found on the website [Thomas Lawrence Family of Wem, Shropshire](#). On [Weerden, van, 2017, 58] I wrote that four sisters were living then, an error apparently stemming from what I had written before I found Miss Sarah's family genealogy, [Lawrence 1844], and the [Lawrence family](#) website.

⁹ For the Crompton family see [Mary Crompton](#).

¹⁰ Coleridge wrote that her 'image endeared his past life to him' [Ishikura 2008, 66].

¹¹ [Coburn et al. 2019, 278 fn 1].

¹² [EH Coleridge 1895, 758 fn 1], p. 15, see also p. 60 of Hall, L. (1940), [Glimpses of life in Liverpool](#) during the reign of George IV. *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 92: 57-76. In the footnote of [EH Coleridge 1895] the house of the Cromptons, [Eton House, Wavertree](#), is mistaken for [Eaton Hall, Cheshire](#). The webpage [Bishop Eton](#) reads, "Dr. Crompton, whose name survives in Crompton's Lane on the east side of the property, and his family lived in Eton Hall [the webpage adds: (sic)] from 1797 to 1843. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his family were regular visitors."

¹³ [Ishikura 2008, 66]. Mary Crompton's indeed nearly angelic obituary is given on p. 406 of Aspland, R. (ed.) (1840), Obituary Mrs. Crompton. *The Christian reformer; or, Unitarian magazine and review*, vol 7.

¹⁴ For the long train of ever evolving gossip see [Weerden, van, and Wepster 2018].

1.1 The introduction to Coleridge, and dishonesty

In 1827, having become professor of astronomy and Royal Astronomer of Ireland, while waiting until Dunsink Observatory was ready to move into Hamilton travelled in Ireland and England. In August 1827 he visited the Misses Lawrence in Liverpool for the first time, and in September, near Ambleside, he met and befriended the Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850).¹⁵

In 1831 Hamilton asked Wordsworth to introduce him to Coleridge,¹⁶ but because Coleridge was in very weak health Wordsworth did not feel free to do so. On 15 March 1832, while visiting the Misses Lawrence for a second time, Hamilton received a letter of introduction to Coleridge from Sarah Lawrence. From 1816 Coleridge lived at Moreton House, Highgate, London, with the Gillman family who took care of him;¹⁷ Hamilton presented Sarah's letter at their house on 18 March, and on that same day Coleridge wrote a reply.¹⁸

In the following quote from Ishikura's article it can be seen that next to Mary Crompton, Coleridge also held Sarah Lawrence in very high esteem. The quote also shows Ishikura's confusion about the Lawrence sisters because not Arabella, but Sarah Lawrence was Coleridge's friend.

Coleridge's reply to Arabella Lawrence starts with moving words: "You, and dear, DEAR, DEAR Mrs Crompton, are among the few Sunshiny Images that endear my past life to me – ." Coleridge promised her that he would welcome her young friend, saying "I shall endeavor to see Mr Hamilton."¹⁹

The next quote, about Hamilton's 1832 visit to the Lawrence sisters and receiving the letter of introduction to Coleridge, contains the statement to be refuted in this article. In a letter to his sister Eliza, written in the evening of 15 March 1832 from Manchester, Hamilton remarked that he had unexpectedly received a letter of introduction from the "eldest Miss Lawrence."²⁰ Mistaking Arabella for the eldest sister instead of Sarah, Ishikura made the unfounded and unproven statement that Hamilton had made the visit to his friend Arabella 'just' to procure this introduction, and that he had been dishonest about it to Eliza,

Hamilton might have tried to use all his intelligence relating to Coleridge. On his visit to the Miss Lawrences, he wrote however to his sister Eliza: "I had the pleasure of hearing many anecdotes of the early life of Coleridge [. . .], and of getting, what I had not all expected, a letter of introduction to him which may be very useful." It would surely have seemed impolite to the elderly ladies who welcomed him so much if he revealed this secret, yet the prime purpose of the visit was just to get a key to open the gate to the sage at Highgate.²¹

Starting with a suggestion that Hamilton "might have tried," in the second half of the foregoing quote Ishikura thus extended her suggestion into a statement which she did not support with any quote or reference, that Hamilton could be dishonest to a friend and to his sister if it would yield something he wanted. Graves' small error led to an unforeseen scenario; Hamilton is now turned into someone he never was before. Neither his letters, nor the remarks about him by Graves or by the people in his biography, give any indication for such behaviour as will be shown hereafter. It was not even a part of the long train of gossip and distorted stories circulating about him.²²

¹⁵ [Graves 1882, 259, 263]. Wordsworth and Hamilton highly valued each other: when in 1820 Wordsworth visited Hamilton at the observatory "he took occasion to say, "I feel happy in a pleasure rarely enjoyed by me, that of being in the company of a man to whom I can look up." "If I," replied Hamilton, "am to look down on you, it is only as Lord Rosse looks down in his telescope to see the stars of heaven reflected"" [Graves 1889, 237].

¹⁶ The Romantic poets [Wordsworth and Coleridge](#) were two of the three famous 'Lake Poets.'

¹⁷ Coleridge's friend [James Gillman](#) (1782-1839) was a well-known surgeon.

¹⁸ Sarah Lawrence's letter is not given, but she apparently wrote that she wished that Coleridge would receive Hamilton. For Sarah Lawrence's letter and Coleridge's reply see [EH Coleridge 1895, 758-760], see also p. 24. The letter was addressed to Miss S. Lawrence, see [EH Coleridge 1895, 760], hence to Sarah Lawrence, not Arabella. In [EH Coleridge 1895, 758] the date of this letter was given as 22 March but that is incorrect, it was 18 March, as given in [Coburn et al. 2019, 278 fn 1]. Sarah Lawrence wrote her letter of introduction on 15 March 1832, the day of Hamilton's visit, and Coleridge answering on 18 March is in agreement with both the date of Hamilton's first visit to Coleridge's house, see p. 24, and the transcript of Coleridge's reply made by Hamilton and given by Graves, which reads "Grove, Highgate, Sunday, March, 1832" [Graves 1882, 543-544].

¹⁹ [Ishikura 2008, 66]

²⁰ [Graves 1882, 535]

²¹ [Ishikura 2008, 66].

²² For why and how parts of Hamilton's reputation became so distorted see [Weerden, van, and Wepster 2018].

1.2 Hamilton’s distorted reputation

Ishikura started her article with positively describing Hamilton’s friendship with Wordsworth and the influence Coleridge had on him. Yet she wrote it in 2008, at the time the very distorted view on Hamilton’s life as an unhappily married alcoholic was generally accepted, and it was not possible to verify the circumstances around the letter of introduction as easily as can be done nowadays; most of the books and short biographies referred to in this article only came online around 2008. Ishikura did not mention the then widespread but distorted notion that in later life Hamilton had been alcoholic, which he was not,²³ yet she did refer to other misinterpretations of Graves’ biography; that Catherine Disney (1800-1853) was the only woman Hamilton ever loved;²⁴ that Hamilton’s “strong wish to be a poet” did “not result in a fine piece of poetry;”²⁵ that Lady Helen Hamilton (1804-1869) could not handle the household which therefore was “liable to be in difficulties;”²⁶ that in his later years Hamilton changed from “cheerful and lively” into “rather sullen and difficult.”²⁷

Why for a long time these notions appeared to represent Hamilton’s private life truthfully is because very regularly almost carelessly gossipy statements are made about Hamilton²⁸ which can only be disproved by elaborate researches of and discussions about his private life within the context of his time.²⁹ It is happening ever since Graves published the biography; his enormous and carefully nuanced biography contains very many details about Hamilton’s life which became wrapped up in negativity, mainly because Graves does not seem to have realised that his biography would be read and interpreted by readers who did not read cover to cover, found his criticisms more interesting than his elaborate praise, or did not know anything about Dublin and its mores in those days. Graves’ few and clearly era-dependent criticisms all revolved about Hamilton’s choice to continue to enjoy drinking alcohol in the times of temperance, yet they were taken out of the context of the social circumstances,³⁰ repeated and further enhanced for more than a century, until the story of Hamilton’s life became distorted almost beyond recognition.

In showing hereafter that the circumstances around the letter of introduction to Coleridge were very different than described in Ishikura’s article, it will be assumed that the view on Hamilton’s character which Graves intended to convey in his biography is restored again. That Catherine Disney was not the only woman in Hamilton’s life, that he had been happy in his marriage and loved his wife Helen, and that, as Graves writes,

The solemn dogged seriousness with which he would take in hand any problem of daily life which was new to him, whether it were important or trivial, and, if it were trivial, the double consciousness alongside of this, taking humorous enjoyment in the comedy, and ready to burst into a genial laugh, were characteristic of him to the end of his life.³¹

1.3 Miss Arabella Lawrence

About Miss Arabella Lawrence only little information was found online. What is known about her is that she was born in Birmingham as one of the eleven children of the merchant Nathaniel

²³ Where the notion of alcoholism came from is discussed in [Sir William Rowan Hamilton - the influence of the 1880s temperance struggles on his posthumous reputation](#).

²⁴ In his biography, [[Hankins 1980](#)], Thomas Hankins showed the importance of Hamilton’s love for Catherine Disney, which had partially been concealed by Graves. Yet Hankins then concluded that she was the only woman Hamilton ever loved; a conclusion disputed in [[Weerden, van, 2017](#)]. See for Catherine’s grievous story and how that affected many more people than just Hamilton [[Weerden, van, 2019](#)].

²⁵ [[Ishikura 2008](#), 67]. That statement is too strong, see for instance [[Graves 1882](#), 496]. Moreover, in early 1833, shortly before marrying Helen Bayly, Hamilton wrote to Coleridge, “I send you some love poems addressed to a lady to whom I am to be married soon. If you should be disposed to point out any of the faults of these trifles, I can be sure, from my experience of my feeling towards former friendly censures, that I should bear it better than did the Archbishop of Granada; but it would be unreasonable to ask you to accept what you might think an ungrateful office, especially as I have no hope of ever ranking as a poet” [[Graves 1885](#), 37].

²⁶ For a different view on Lady Hamilton and the daily life at the observatory see [[Weerden, van, 2017](#), ch. 9].

²⁷ [[Ishikura 2008](#), 65 fn 4, 67-69]. For one of the reasons the view on Hamilton’s private life became so distorted see the 2018 article about the neglected [influence of the women](#) in Hamilton’s life.

²⁸ Next to not having been accused of scheming, also the word “sullen” does not seem to have been used before.

²⁹ [[Weerden, van, 2017](#)], [[Weerden, van, 2019](#)]

³⁰ As discussed in [The strange case of Sir William Rowan Hamilton - a biographer’s opinion as primary source](#).

³¹ [[Graves 1882](#), 123]

Lawrence (ca 1749-1803) and Mary Johnson (1755-1804). They had nine daughters and two sons, of whom seven daughters and one son survived into adulthood.³² The family was Unitarian, and in 1793 Mary set up a girls' school.³³ Her eldest child was fifteen then, and the youngest was one, but apparently, growing up many or most of her daughters joined her, and also became teachers.

After the deaths of their parents, late in 1806 or early in 1807 the then seven living sisters moved to Liverpool.³⁴ From 1807 to 1839 they had a girl's school in Gateacre, of which Sarah, a "writer, poet and good Horatian Scholar," was principal. They were "highly accomplished teachers, attracting the daughters of leading Unitarian families to their school."³⁵ Eliza married in 1810 and died in 1811, Frances died in 1816, and Jane in 1842. At the time of the 1851 census the four remaining sisters, Sarah, Mary, Arabella, and Harriet, lived together in Milverton, Warwickshire,³⁶ which means that it can be assumed that when Hamilton visited them in Liverpool in 1827, and twice in 1832, the then five sisters also lived together.

What further is known about Arabella Lawrence, who was called "an impressive young educationalist,"³⁷ is that she was a friend of Lady Anne Isabella Byron (1792-1860), corresponding with her from in any case 1818 until 1859,³⁸ about education and the Cooperative Movement.³⁹ From about 1829 until 1832 Arabella Lawrence was governess of Lady Byron's daughter Ada (1815-1852), later Lady Lovelace, who is famous for writing the first program for a digital computer, the "Analytical Engine" of the mathematician Charles Babbage (1791-1871).⁴⁰

In 1829 Ada had become bed-ridden after a severe attack of measles, and just before or at that time Lady Byron had asked help of family friends for Ada's education: William King (1786-1865), head of the Brighton Cooperative Society,⁴¹ the mathematician William Frend (1757-1841)⁴² and his daughter Sophia (1809-1892)⁴³ who in 1837 would marry the mathematician Augustus De Morgan (1806-1871),⁴⁴ and Arabella Lawrence. Arabella corresponded with Ada, and every few weeks she visited her.⁴⁵ During one of these visits, in March 1830 Arabella wrote a letter to Hamilton from "Lady Byron's residence at Hanger Hill" proposing to introduce him to Lady Byron, but according to Graves, "the offer does not seem to have been acted on."⁴⁶ After Ada's recovery in 1832 other tutors were hired.

Graves had continued his introduction of Arabella Lawrence⁴⁷ writing,

To Miss Lawrence Hamilton had shown some of his poems, and had received from her in return criticisms honestly blending praise and dispraise.⁴⁸

This can be connected directly to a letter Hamilton wrote in February 1833 to his then wife-to-be Helen Bayly,

You may perhaps remember my telling you that I was so much and so agreeably struck by your sincerity in saying, in the summer before last, that you preferred my

³² [Lawrence family](#) website.

³³ [Watts 1998, 55]

³⁴ They must have moved to Liverpool after Sara Coleridge's visit in the autumn of 1806, see p. 15.

³⁵ [Watts 1998, 55]. For Sarah Lawrence as an author, see her [most widely held works](#).

³⁶ [Lawrence 1844, 25], [Lawrence family](#) website. Their brother Nathaniel died in 1824.

³⁷ [Seymour 2018, 148]

³⁸ Correspondence ca 1818-1842, and 1858-1859.

³⁹ "[In 1829,] at Liverpool, [Lady Byron] talked with Arabella Lawrence about Miss Lawrence's own successful school for the city's poor" [Seymour 2018, 166].

⁴⁰ [Charles Babbage](#). The Analytical Engine was conceived in 1837, but only partly built. The 'first computer program' is between pages 722 and 723 of the '[Sketch of the Analytical Engine](#)' by L.F. Menabrea. In Taylor, R. (ed.) (1843), *Scientific Memoirs*, 666-690. With Notes by the Translator (A[ugusta].A[da].L[ovelace].), 691-731.

⁴¹ *Dr. William King and the Co-operator*, xxii-xxiii, "Dr. King [...] addressed the workers in language that all could understand. He [showed how they] could improve their conditions by working together; demonstrated how even the poorest could amass capital by co-operative shopkeeping; and foretold how voluntary co-operation [...] would lead to ownership and associated industry, and eventually carry the workers forward to a new society."

⁴² [William Frend](#) was, next to mathematician, a Unitarian clergyman and social reformer.

⁴³ [Sophia De Morgan](#) née Frend, was a spiritualist writer and activist, and a confidante of Lady Byron.

⁴⁴ [Augustus De Morgan](#) would become Ada Lovelace's teacher and mathematical correspondent. In 1841 he started a correspondence with Hamilton which lasted until the latter's death. [Graves 1889, 245-632].

⁴⁵ [Seymour 2018]

⁴⁶ [Graves 1882, 374]. Between 1822 and 1840 Lady Byron lived in [Ealing, London](#), at Fordhook House and Hanger Hill House.

⁴⁷ See p. 2.

⁴⁸ [Graves 1882, 191].

sister's poems⁴⁹ to my own, as to mention it to an English lady, Miss Isabella Lawrence, with whom I had for many years been intimate, our intimacy having begun in a similar instance of candour on her part.⁵⁰

Although Graves partly misread Miss Arabella's name when giving Hamilton's letter, in complete accordance with this quote Hamilton did mention her name unambiguously in the letter to Eliza given hereafter, written in June 1832 while staying with the "Miss Lawrences". It was the third time he visited them; the first visit was in August 1827 while travelling, the second in March 1832 on his way to London,⁵¹ and this time he was returning home after a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Oxford.⁵²

In the evening I came out here with my bag, in the hope, in which I was not disappointed, that the Miss Lawrences might have a room to spare. My old friend Miss Arabella L. is absent, but will return to-day, to set out however to-morrow on a party to the Lakes of Cumberland. The eldest Miss L. has shown me a very affectionate and interesting letter, chiefly of a religious nature, which was written to her by Coleridge while I was in London.⁵³

This quote is not only unambiguous as regards Arabella's name; it also leaves no room for any doubt about who was Coleridge's friend and had written the letter of introduction; in absence of Hamilton's friend Arabella, "the eldest" Lawrence sister showed him Coleridge's reply to her letter of introduction.⁵⁴

What can also be inferred from what is known about both Arabella and Sarah Lawrence is that Ishikura's view on the Lawrence sisters as a group of apparently interchangeable elderly ladies⁵⁵ is too shallow. Even though they lived together, were teachers and governesses as many educated unmarried women then were, it appears that they lived their own lives; Sarah had been governess with the Cromptons, Arabella with the Byrons. Sarah was an author and a friend of Coleridge, Arabella was called an impressive educationalist, and was apparently regularly away from home. And also for Hamilton the sisters were not interchangeable, calling Arabella "my old friend," and Sarah "the eldest Miss L."

1.4 Truthfulness

The main subject to discuss here is the dishonest behaviour Ishikura attributed to Hamilton, which is not recognisable in any comment made by anyone who knew Hamilton, even on the contrary. As will be shown hereafter, Hamilton was known for his extreme openness, and even though he could decide to evade a subject, he could not keep his silence for very long.

On 16 July 1823, just after his entrance to Trinity College Dublin, Hamilton wrote to 'Cousin Arthur' (1776-1840), actually a cousin of Hamilton's father Archibald,⁵⁶

I would wish rather to be thought dull than malignant, though but in the slightest degree; and I have a greater desire to be loved than admired.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ In 1838 Eliza Mary Hamilton published a volume called *Poems*.

⁵⁰ [Graves 1885, 23-24]. From the sentence by Lady Byron which is given in the record of her 1858 correspondence with Arabella Lawrence, see footnote 38, "You appear to think that I regard Education as the Panacea for moral evils - no - I do not ..." it can be inferred that Arabella Lawrence was as honest to Lady Byron as she was to Hamilton.

⁵¹ For Hamilton's first visit see p. 3, for the second visit and the letter to Eliza see p. 3 and p. 23.

⁵² In 1830 Charles Babbage published *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England* which was widely read and supported by both men of science and members of the public, see for instance [Graves 1882, 405 (Lady Campbell), 405-406 (Robinson), 422]. Even though not everyone agreed with Babbage as to the causes of the decline, to "redress this balance" the [British Association for the Advancement of Science](#) was founded in 1831. Hamilton became a member in October 1831 [Graves 1882, 467, 483], see also p. 17, and thereafter, whenever he could, he attended the yearly meetings of the Association.

⁵³ [Graves 1882, 575-576], [EH Coleridge 1895, 758]

⁵⁴ Coleridge's reply to Sarah Lawrence's letter of introduction is the letter starting with "You and dear, dear Mrs. Crompton," see p. 3 and p. 24. For the transcript made by Hamilton see [Graves 1882, 543-544].

⁵⁵ [Ishikura 2008, 66]

⁵⁶ After their father's death in 1819 'Cousin Arthur', as Hamilton called him, seems to have become a father figure to the Hamilton siblings.

⁵⁷ [Graves 1882, 143]

This stance towards openness and honesty would remain to be important to Hamilton for the rest of his life; in 1858 he wished his epitaph to be ‘a labour-loving and truth-loving man.’ Throughout Graves’ enormous biography it can be seen how highly Hamilton valued truth and truthfulness; for instance when comparing poetry and science, he associated poetry with beauty, and science with truth. And in 1832 comparing the three women in his life, Catherine Disney, Ellen de Vere (ca 1810-1889), and Helen Bayly, he called them Sweet Piety, Enthusiasm, and Truth; he was impressed by Helen’s “eminent truth of character.”⁵⁸

In his obituary, his friend Augustus De Morgan wrote,

In the matter of right and wrong, Hamilton was very simple-minded. To say he was truthful would be only a part of the truth; his aptitude to entertain misgivings [. . .] made him often think it right to express his opinions to avoid the possibility of being misunderstood.⁵⁹

And as regards honesty his friend Aubrey de Vere (1814-1902) gave a very pictorial quote,

A quality which belonged pre-eminently to him was his absolute absence of all disguise. Some one remarked of him: “Hamilton is simply transparent; his thoughts are as visible to you as the leaves of a tree close by and sun-smitten. It would be impossible for him to tell a lie even if he wished to do so, and he could no more conceal a thought than he could tell a lie.”⁶⁰

The friendship between Hamilton and Miss Arabella was a for those times unusually truthful one, as was seen in the 1833 letter to Helen Bayly.⁶¹ That was not a single occurrence of honesty; when in 1827, still only twenty-one years old, Hamilton had been elected Royal Astronomer of Ireland, Miss Arabella very openly warned him “not to become too excited by his new honours.” And later that year, when he was again struggling with the loss of his first love Catherine Disney who had married in 1825, “she saw signs of a dangerous morbidity, and warned him against “indulging too often this train of thought.”⁶²

The truthfulness was mutual; most likely in 1831⁶³ Hamilton wrote a letter to Arabella Lawrence, who was Unitarian, which perfectly illustrates De Morgan’s quote. Graves gave the letter as “proof of the deep thought with which Hamilton considered the problems of religious philosophy;” here only the for this article relevant parts are given,

You know that in our many conversations, remembered by me with great pleasure, I always studiously avoided the usually unprofitable topic of religious controversy, and you will not think that I now wish to introduce it, but will consider me as only anxious to guard against the possibility of being mistaken, if I shortly express my opinion of Dr. Channing’s *theology*. I consider him as a good man and an eloquent writer. But in his anti-trinitarian speculations – the term of courtesy “Unitarian” I cannot use as a distinctive epithet, since it would imply that the members of the Church of England did not pray on the festival by which they intend to express their belief of the Trinity, to be enabled “in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity” – in these Dr. C. appears to me to have ventured beyond the region, I will not say of all philosophy, but of his own philosophical attainments.

Hamilton ended the letter writing,

Do not think that I want to draw you into any argument, in which indeed it is unlikely we should have time to engage, although I thought it right to say this much, lest my studious silence on the subject might be misconstrued.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ [Graves 1889, 230], [Graves 1882, 346-347], [Graves 1885, 3, 4]

⁵⁹ [Graves 1889, 218]

⁶⁰ [Vere, de, 1897, 41]. In 1831 Aubrey de Vere became a life-long friend of Hamilton.

⁶¹ See p. 6.

⁶² [Hankins 1980, 52, 406 note 32]

⁶³ Graves supposed that this letter was written in 1831 because in October an article had been published in the *British Critic* on the Works of William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), of which Hamilton had made an abstract for himself. In the letter Hamilton wrote about the “mysteries of reason” and the “mysteries ascribed to religion” [Graves 1882, 464].

⁶⁴ [Graves 1882, 464-466]

As De Morgan alluded to, Hamilton thus chose risking his friendship with Arabella over remaining silent about his opinions about Dr. Channing. And he did not even utter them cautiously; he was apparently either trusting that also Arabella would value truth over silence, or prepared to lose a friendship with someone who valued truth less than he did.

Not being able to tell a lie, as was stated in the quote given by De Vere, might seem contradictory to having been able to evade a subject as Hamilton did in his correspondence with Arabella, even if only for a short time. Yet evading a subject as the result of an earlier decision is very different from being in a conversation, and then trying to conceal a thought which already occurred. It is not known who brought Coleridge up as a subject in their conversations during his visit in March 1832, but Sarah Lawrence or her sisters telling him anecdotes about Coleridge⁶⁵ brought Hamilton in precisely such a situation, in which he will not have been able to conceal his thoughts. His wish to see Coleridge will have beamed from his face, something which may have prompted Sarah Lawrence to write a letter of introduction for him.

Supposing, for the sake of argument, that Hamilton did not take Wordsworth's hesitations as regards Coleridge's health seriously, the statements and letters show that if he knew that Sarah Lawrence had been a friend of Coleridge he most likely would just have asked her for an introduction; they already knew each other from Hamilton's first visit to Liverpool in 1827. Or he would have asked Arabella to ask her sister; only two years earlier Arabella had offered to introduce him to Lady Byron, and there was not any reason to assume that she now would not help him to become introduced to Coleridge.

2 Family connections

The letter to Arabella about Dr. Channing is one of the many indications in the biography of how important not only truth was for Hamilton, but also religion. And although his philosophical arguments have not been discussed here, even the here given parts of the letter show his familiarity with the subject; Hamilton had grown up in the theological-intellectual environment of Uncle James, a reverend and linguist who at college had obtained both premiums and certificates.⁶⁶

Not much is known about Uncle James' private life but his friendships seem to have been strong; when in 1819 Richard Butler became vicar of Trim he very regularly spent his evenings in the Hamilton home.⁶⁷ In 1823 Hamilton was admitted to Trinity College Dublin and started to live with Cousin Arthur in Dublin, but he apparently also was often in Trim. In September 1824 Hamilton wrote to Eliza that in conversation Butler "outshines the whole world,"⁶⁸ and combining that with a remark Butler made about himself in later years, that he held "unfashionable views,"⁶⁹ draws a picture of evenings, with the children sleeping already, in which two men, a fast developing boy and perhaps a woman, together held many interesting theological discussions. In the same letter Hamilton wrote to Eliza,

[Butler] differs in almost everything from both Mr. Knox and Miss H., who, you may remember, I said seemed the antipodes of each other. I believe I must introduce a new figure, and make them the three angles of a triangle.

It was not found who Miss H. was,⁷⁰ yet Hamilton was acquainted with the influential and "eloquent lay theologian" Alexander Knox (1757-1831)⁷¹ through Aunt Elizabeth Hamilton née Boyle, who was a niece of Peter (1733-1828) and Elizabeth La Touche née Vicars (1756-1842)⁷²

⁶⁵ See p. 3.

⁶⁶ See [Uncle James - theologian and linguist](#).

⁶⁷ See p. 1.

⁶⁸ [[Graves 1882](#), 162]

⁶⁹ See [Memoirs of Robert Butler](#), a letter written in 1852. The Hamilton mentioned on p. 164 of the Memoirs is Uncle James' son James Alexander (1824/1825-1885), who had succeeded his father after his death in 1847.

⁷⁰ Miss H. may have been one of the two Hincks sisters whose school in North Great George's street Eliza attended at some unknown period, but in any case in 1823 and perhaps until January 1825 [[Graves 1882](#), 141, 171].

⁷¹ [[Graves 1882](#), 155], [Alexander Knox](#).

⁷² Elizabeth Boyle was a daughter of Alexander Boyle (.. - ..) and Grace Vicars (1763- ..) of Kirlish Lodge, Drumquin, Tyrone, who [married in 1783](#). Around 1774 Boyle was one of the most influential converted [Methodist preachers](#) of that time. Grace, who was described as having an 'impressive Christian spirit', was a [sister of Elizabeth Vicars](#) who in 1787 married [Peter La Touche](#) of [Bellevue estate](#).

of Bellevue in Wicklow.⁷³ Even though he had lodgings in Dublin,⁷⁴ Knox more or less lived with the La Touche family for thirty years⁷⁵ and was called the “sage of Bellevue.”⁷⁶ In any case in August 1824 Hamilton made an extensive visit to Bellevue. He wrote to Uncle James that he had “a great deal of conversation, and was a good deal together” with Knox, whom he called a “book that wore spectacles.”⁷⁷

Hamilton had just turned nineteen then, while “Knox was universally admitted to be an admirable conversationalist; and people used to visit him in Dawson Street, much in the same way as people used to visit S.T. Coleridge at Highgate.”⁷⁸ This for Hamilton clearly intense contact with Knox at such a young age therefore attributes to the view on both his early philosophy, which may have been further developed already than it may appear from the biography when reading it superficially, and on his 1832 visit to Coleridge, by making it less out of the ordinary than it seems to be when it is not taken into account how Knox was regarded at that time. It is not known how often Hamilton spoke with Knox, yet mentioning that he received a book⁷⁹ from Knox “according to old promise” signifies earlier visits.

The reason Graves mentioned Hamilton’s visit to Bellevue seems to have been the compliment Hamilton received from the by him revered Alexander Knox; the extract Graves made of Hamilton’s letter to Uncle James ends with Hamilton mentioning Mr. Knox’ “approbation which almost amounted to flattery” for his second prize poem, ‘Eustace de St. Pierre’,⁸⁰ which he had to read “first to Mr. Knox and then to the family at Bellevue.”⁸¹ Graves would mention family members for the same reason throughout the biography; except for the family members who were directly involved in Hamilton’s education, he only mentioned them when they appeared in letters together with eminent people.

Graves’ main motive for writing the biography in the way he did was to counteract the Dublin gossip about Hamilton’s habit of drinking wine at dinners and parties in a time that was not generally accepted any more, by trying to convince his readers what a wonderful man his friend had been, yet without defending him and showing that Hamilton had never been drunk.⁸² He instead focused on emphasising how many eminent people Hamilton had known and how many of them had liked or even admired him, while almost neglecting his very large networks of family, ‘local’ friends⁸³ and close colleagues, or anyone whom he deemed not important enough to impress his readers. At the time Graves wrote his biography, which he indeed appears to have written for his contemporaries,⁸⁴ it may not have been such a problem; Hamilton’s enormous networks will have been well-known. But when in the early twentieth century Hamilton’s reputation became distorted this knowledge was generally lost, even to such an extent that it has been suggested that in his later years he was lonely and often alone.⁸⁵

Graves’ obscuration of Hamilton’s many family connections, and of the people around Hamilton who were not important enough, amongst whom also most of the women, seems to have led to Ishikura’s apparent view on Hamilton as an enthusiastic youngster who was socially somewhat secluded, and in which the best, or perhaps even the only, way for Hamilton to receive an introduction to Coleridge was via Wordsworth or the Lawrence sisters. To show that there were many more possibilities, both Hamilton’s family connections and his scientific networks around that time will be discussed. It will be shown that if Hamilton would have “used all his intelligence” to become introduced to Coleridge, as Ishikura suggested, trying to obtain it through a scheme involving the Lawrence sisters was certainly not the most obvious thing to do.

⁷³ The La Touche family was prominent in [banking and politics](#).

⁷⁴ [Knox, Alexander](#).

⁷⁵ From 1803 Knox became “almost domesticated” in Bellevue. He returned to Dublin after Peter La Touche’s death in 1828.

⁷⁶ [Knox](#) was raised in the [Methodist](#) religion, but “before he was twenty” he converted to Anglicanism.

⁷⁷ [[Graves 1882](#), 155, 159].

⁷⁸ DNB, Knox, [comparison with Coleridge](#).

⁷⁹ Jebb, J. (1820) *Sacred Literature*.

⁸⁰ [[Graves 1882](#), 673]

⁸¹ [[Graves 1882](#), 159-160]

⁸² Why Graves did not defend Hamilton has been discussed in [Sir WR Hamilton - a studious and happy life](#).

⁸³ See for instance [[Graves 1882](#), 405]; Hamilton’s friend Rev. [Mortimer O’Sullivan](#) (ca 1791-1859) is hardly mentioned in the biography.

⁸⁴ That Graves wrote for his contemporaries can for instance be seen in the first sentences of the preface to the third volume, [[Graves 1889](#), v].

⁸⁵ [[Weerden, van, and Wepster 2018](#), 16]

2.1 Family and friends

From Graves' family tree⁸⁶ it can be seen that when Graves wrote about Hamilton's family he concentrated on his paternal family, in particular on Uncle James and Aunt Sydney Hamilton, because to be educated Hamilton lived with them in Trim, and on Cousin Arthur, a barrister in Dublin, because after the death of his father Hamilton stayed with him when he was in Dublin, and he lived with him when he attended college.

Uncle James' connection with Robert Butler, the La Touches and Alexander Knox having been discussed already, he also was somehow acquainted with the Disney family.⁸⁷ In August 1824 he took Hamilton with him to Summerhill House where the Disney family then lived; Thomas Disney (1766-1851) was agent to Baron Langford (1763-1825), the owner of Summerhill. At that time one of the Disney sons, Lambert Disney (1808-1867), became a pupil at Uncle James' school,⁸⁸ and the visit may have been paid to make their acquaintance. That day Hamilton met one of Lambert's elder sisters, Catherine Disney, whom he fell head over heels in love with. Even though she was also in love with him, in May 1825 she was forced by her family to marry someone else. Not knowing anything about the coercion until Catherine told him about it shortly before her death in 1853, it took Hamilton until 1831 to cope with his loss.⁸⁹

Both in connection to Uncle James and Hamilton's father Archibald some names of acquaintances have been mentioned in the biography, and from Archibald some letters to friends are given, but either it was not found who they were, or it is not known how well acquainted these people were with the Hamiltons. Therefore, especially about Archibald's circle of acquaintances hardly anything is known, yet it must have been very extensive. In his youth he was often with the mother of the famous Archibald Hamilton Rowan (1751-1834), Jane Hamilton née Rowan (1726/1727- ca 1793), either at Killyleagh Castle, or perhaps in her house at Rutland Square in Dublin.⁹⁰ He became a solicitor, and for his work he was often in England; he had a London address, and after the death of his wife, Hamilton's mother Sarah Hamilton née Hutton (1780-1817), he married Anne Barlow, perhaps née Pollock (.. -1823), a widow he had met most likely in London.⁹¹ If Hamilton had been thinking about how to become introduced to Coleridge who lived in London, and if he knew who his father's London contacts were, they might have been among the ones to contemplate.

In his family tree Graves did not give the maternal family of Cousin Arthur, and besides his role in Hamilton's life and the fact that Graves liked him very much, nothing further was found online about Arthur Hamilton other than his burial record.⁹² Graves also did not give the families of the two female family members called Margaret, nor the Scottish relatives from Hamilton's paternal grandmother's side, Grace Hamilton née McFerrand (1743-1808).⁹³ It was not found who J. Collins was, the husband of Hamilton's great-aunt Margaret Collins née Hamilton (.. - after 1821), a sister of his grandfather William Hamilton (.. -1783), yet they all will have known each other well; when Hamilton was four his eldest sister Grace (1802-1846) went "on a visit to her grand-aunt Campbell" (.. - ..), a sister of their grandmother Grace Hamilton; and after their father Archibald died in December 1819 Grace was taken care of by their great-aunt Margaret Collins, and Hamilton visited them.⁹⁴

A last person who is missing in the family tree is Hamilton's stepbrother Joseph Pollock Barlow (1809/1810-1886). From 1819, when his mother Anne married Hamilton's father Archibald, until his death in 1886 he lived in Dublin. In his death certificate he is called a Gentleman, and he left his half-sister, Hamilton's half-sister Annabella Aglietta née Hamilton (1820-1895), quite a legacy.⁹⁵ But it is not known whether Hamilton maintained contact with him.

⁸⁶ [Graves 1882, xix]

⁸⁷ Only once it appears from the biography that Uncle James visited the Disneys; the visit mentioned here.

⁸⁸ [Weerden, van, 2019, 21], [Graves 1882, 164]

⁸⁹ Catherine Disney - a biographical sketch.

⁹⁰ Archibald Hamilton Rowan, [Graves 1882, 11], see also Graves' [addendum](#) to the biography.

⁹¹ [Graves 1882, 71], see for the address p. 60 of Archibald Hamilton's [Treatise on Impressing](#).

⁹² [Graves 1882, 27-28], [Arthur Hamilton L.L.D.](#) Remarkably, the same page contains the record of one of the three early deceased sons of Catherine Disney, William Brownlow Barlow, who was buried in the Barlow Vault in St. Werburgh.

⁹³ See for her family [Grace McFerrand](#).

⁹⁴ [Graves 1882, xix, 35, 74, 76]

⁹⁵ Barlow's [death certificate](#) and [legacy](#). James Joseph Aglietta (1848- after 1919) was Annabella's son. Barlow died in 1886, in the same nursing home where Hamilton's cousin [James Alexander Hamilton](#) had died in 1885.

2.2 A large dinner and family visits

Contrary to the Hamiltons, information about members of the large family of Hamilton's mother Sarah Hutton was easily found online. Although Graves only mentioned some of them directly, such as Hamilton's uncle John Willey (1781-1847) because he taught his nephew practical astronomy, Graves did give letters in which Hamilton wrote about family members when also eminent people were mentioned. Concentrating on the period before Hamilton's visit to Coleridge, and still searching for the most easy ways for Hamilton to become introduced to him, in Hamilton's early letters two remarks were found from which it can be inferred that he knew many of these family members very well, and that some of them were in any case indirectly connected to Coleridge.

The first of these remarks was an excerpt of a letter, most likely given by Graves because of the reference to Edward Hicks (1792-1866), who had been a fellow of Trinity College Dublin from 1813 to 1820, became rector of Ardtrea and from 1825 of Killyleagh, and who would become famous because of his deciphering Mesopotamian cuneiform.⁹⁶

On 16 July 1823 Hamilton wrote to Cousin Arthur,

On Thursday I dined with a large party at Mr. Robert Hutton's. Mrs. Robert Hutton was there of course, a host in herself, for the charm of the greatest vivacity regulated by the most perfect etiquette and everything else which makes female society so delightful. Mr. Hincks, the late Fellow, was there, and paid particular attention to me.⁹⁷

The second remark was given as an excerpt of an 1826 letter written while Hamilton was, apparently, making extended family visits in and around Belfast, and the reason for Graves to give this excerpt was that Hamilton met Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829), who at that time was president of the Royal Society.⁹⁸ Davy was a famous English chemist and a good friend of Coleridge, making him the most direct connection between Hamilton and Coleridge, yet Davy died in 1829, three years before Hamilton would visit Coleridge. Through Maria Edgeworth there was an extra connection between Hamilton and Davy; the latter had "formed a long romantic friendship" with Anna Beddoes née Edgeworth (1772-1824), one of Maria Edgeworth's sisters.

On Wednesday 9 August 1826 Hamilton wrote from Belfast to a Miss Hutton,

I liked Mrs. Swanwick very much. [...] I came away the next morning about six o'clock, and got to Belfast on a coach which took me up at the ruins of Grey Abbey, a beautiful place near Rhodens. I have since been driving a good deal; that same day (Saturday) I went with Emily and Maria to pay a visit at Clifton, Mrs. Halliday's place, and at Cabinhill, Mrs. Drennan's. [...] On my return to Belfast I dined along with Dr. Bruce, at Dr. M'Donnell's house, where we met Sir Humphry Davy.⁹⁹

Searching for who these people were it appeared that of the eleven persons mentioned in the two excerpts, seven were related to Hamilton, either directly or by marriage: Robert Hutton (1784-1870) and Caroline Hutton née Crompton (1793-1882), Edward Hincks (1792-1866), William Bruce (1757-1841),¹⁰⁰ his daughters Emily (.. - ..) and Maria (.. -1857),¹⁰¹ and Sarah

⁹⁶ Edward Hincks was a [minister in the Church of Ireland](#) although his father [Thomas Dix Hincks](#) (1767-1857) was a Presbyterian minister. [Hincks](#) was the first to decipher the most important elements of Mesopotamian cuneiform. For his decipherment of both hieroglyphs and cuneiform see for instance the 1908 article by [L.A. Pooler](#), and for Mesopotamian cuneiform see [Cathcart, K.J. \(2011\), The Earliest Contributions to the Decipherment of Sumerian and Akkadian](#). On at least two occasions, in 1838 and 1841, Hamilton would read a paper by Hincks to the Royal Irish Academy. In 1822 Edward Hincks had received an [inscribed copy](#) of Coleridge's book [The Statesman's Manual](#), "27 March 1822. Reverend Edward Hincks - with sincere respect of the author S.T.C." But in 1822 Hincks was not famous yet, and it is not known whether Hincks and Coleridge knew each other.

⁹⁷ [[Graves 1882](#), 142]

⁹⁸ [Humphry Davy](#) was president of the [Royal Society](#) from 1820-1827. One of his discoveries was that "laughing gas" can be used to relieve pain. Before giving the excerpt from Hamilton's letter from Belfast Graves commented, "One may gather from the brief notice of the meeting that neither had the opportunity of fully appreciating the other" [[Graves 1882](#), 211], which obviously more expresses his regret than Hamilton's, at least at that time.

⁹⁹ [[Graves 1882](#), 215]. "Rhodens" may have been the townland [Roddans](#); the [Grey Abbey ruins](#) are only a few kilometres from Roddans.

¹⁰⁰ Rev. [William Bruce](#) was a Presbyterian minister and principal of the Belfast Academy, which became known as 'Bruce's Academy', see p. 183 of [History of Belfast](#). Bruce was a grand-uncle of Hamilton, because he married Susannah Hutton (1763- after 1797), an aunt of Hamilton's mother Sarah Hutton.

¹⁰¹ The birth years of Emily and Maria as given on the Geni website, [1781 and 1782](#), cannot be right; their

Drennan née Swanwick (1769- ca 1867). She was the widow of William Drennan (1754-1820), a physician, politician and poet,¹⁰² one of the founders of the Society of United Irishmen, and a friend of Archibald Hamilton Rowan. There was an indirect link between Rowan and Coleridge; Rowan had been a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), who in 1797 had married William Godwin (1756-1836), who in turn was a friend of Coleridge.¹⁰³

It was not found who the Miss Hutton was to whom Hamilton wrote the 1826 letter, nor Mrs. Swanwick whom he mentioned, yet because the Swanwicks were related to the Huttons they will have been relatives. In the Lawrence family tree and its continuation, the Swanwick family tree, it was further found that through some of these people Hamilton was also related by marriage to the Miss Lawrences; the relationships will be given in the Appendix.¹⁰⁴ For James M'Donnell (1763-1845)¹⁰⁵ and Davy no family relations were found, and also William (1763-1836)¹⁰⁶ and Marian Halliday née Webster (.. - ..) do not seem to have been related to Hamilton, yet their second son William Robert Halliday (1808-1878) was a class mate of Hamilton at TCD, having entered on the same day.¹⁰⁷

Searching for the people in these few sentences direct links were thus found between the Huttons, Hamilton's maternal family, and the Swanwick, Drennan, Hincks and Bruce families, as well as indirect links to the Miss Lawrences; through Mrs. Drennan and Hincks, as rector of Killyleagh, links to Archibald Hamilton Rowan and through him a link to Coleridge; through Bruce and MacDonnell links with Davy and through Davy links to Maria Edgeworth and to Coleridge. It shows how close these networks were, and how the members of the upper classes all seem to have known each other. The connection with Maria Edgeworth is interesting, because it might suggest that she also knew Coleridge.¹⁰⁸

Although such family relations may seem very distant now they were important then; both Graves and Hamilton wrote about such kinships. Graves for instance showed how Hamilton had been related to the astronomer John Couch Adams (1819-1892) as a footnote in the Hamilton family tree;¹⁰⁹ in 1832 Hamilton mentioned that his then pupil Lord Adare (1812-1871) was a "distant connexion of mine – fifth cousin by my mother's side," and Adare was "delighted" and "proud" of such a 'near relationship.'¹¹⁰ But they were also useful; in a time in which people needed to be introduced to each other because there were not many ways to be certain that people were who they said they were, such kinships were important to be able to reach out far and build new connections.

mother Susannah Hutton was born in 1763, she will not have had her first child, Emily, in 1781, while Emily would have had her first child in 1830. Another argument is that Hamilton called them by their first names, indicating they will not have been much older than he was. Maria died in 1857.

¹⁰² William Drennan had been a physician from 1778 until 1806 or 1807, when he inherited a fortune, apparently first in 1806 from his mother and in any case in 1807 from a wealthy cousin, and could give up practising medicine. See C.J. Hume Logan (1983), 'Dr. William Drennan - his life in Georgian Ireland'.

¹⁰³ The feminist philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft was the mother of Mary Shelley née Godwin (1797-1851) who wrote 'Frankenstein'. Mary Wollstonecraft's partner and the father of Mary Shelley was William Godwin. It is not known if Hamilton would have been happy with an introduction from Rowan, because there had been tensions between his father Archibald and Rowan [Graves 1882, 11-13]. For Archibald Hamilton and Archibald Hamilton Rowan see also Weerden, A. van, *The Hamiltons of Jervis Street*.

¹⁰⁴ [Lawrence 1844], [Swanwick et al. 1899]. For the Appendix see p. 30.

¹⁰⁵ James MacDonnell was a physician and polymath who had close connections to Drennan, and to the United Irishmen although that was not always without problems. MacDonnell was called the *unchallenged doyen* of Belfast medicine. In 1822 he was one of the physicians who revived the *Belfast Medical Society* of Drennan and Halliday. Next to Drennan he also knew William Bruce well; he was president of the Belfast Literary Society when Bruce was vice-president, see pp. 193-194 of *History of Belfast*.

¹⁰⁶ William Halliday or Haliday was a nephew and heir of the physician Dr. Alexander Henry Haliday (ca 1728-1802), and had earned his MD with a thesis on Electricity in Medicine. See p. 210 of *The 200th Anniversary* of the founding of the Belfast Medical Society. William Drennan and William Halliday were two of these founders, and former presidents of the Society, see the *Ulster Medical Society Archives*, and p. 50 of R.W.M. Strain (1952), *The History and Associations of the Belfast Charitable Society*.

¹⁰⁷ [Graves 1882, 181], see also p. 358 and 362 of the Entrance records for 7 July 1823. The records show that William Robert Halliday was only fifteen when he entered TCD, about two years younger than Hamilton, yet he entered fourth of their class, after Hamilton, Bartholomew Clifford Lloyd (1808-1872) and Henry Barry Knox (1807-1869)

¹⁰⁸ It is not known if Maria Edgeworth knew Coleridge but it *certainly is possible*.

¹⁰⁹ John Couch Adams. For the kinship see p. 31, for Graves' footnote [Graves 1882, xix].

¹¹⁰ [Graves 1889, 336], [Graves 1882, 589]

2.3 An active family life

In the first excerpt, written in 1823, Hamilton mentioned that the large dinner party was held at “Mr Robert Hutton’s.”¹¹¹ Both Hamilton’s grandfather, Robert Hutton (1756-ca 1830) and his grandmother Mary Ann Guinin (.. -1837)¹¹² were still alive, which means that in theory they could have organised this party. Yet Hamilton, who then was seventeen, was writing to Cousin Arthur who may not have known the Huttons as well as Hamilton did, and calling Robert ‘Mr.’ instead of ‘grandfather’ indicates that he was writing about his twenty-one year older maternal first cousin once removed. Robert Hutton (1784-1870) and his wife Caroline née Crompton (1793-1882) directly connected Hamilton’s maternal relatives, the Huttons, to Coleridge’s Liverpool friends, Peter and Mary Crompton, and to Sarah Lawrence, who had been governess to the Cromptons: Robert was the eldest son of the Dublin coach maker John Hutton (1756-1830) and Priscilla Dix (1750-1835), therefore first cousin of Hamilton’s mother Sarah;¹¹³ Caroline was the youngest daughter of Peter and Mary Crompton.¹¹⁴

What further connected the people in these networks of Hutton relatives and friends was that many of them were nonconformist. Both the Lawrences and the Swanwicks were descendants of Philip Henry (1631-1696), a nonconformist clergyman.¹¹⁵ The Miss Lawrences, the Cromptons and the Hutton coach-building family were Unitarians; Joseph Hutton (1765-1856) was a Presbyterian Minister, his son Joseph (1790-1860) a Unitarian minister;¹¹⁶ Susan Hutton (.. -1858), one of Sarah’s sisters, married a Moravian minister, the aforementioned John Willey;¹¹⁷ William Drennan and William Halliday were Presbyterians;¹¹⁸ William Bruce and the father of Edward Hincks were Presbyterian ministers;¹¹⁹ James MacDonnell ‘was raised’ in his mother’s “protestant religion.”¹²⁰

Their nonconformism explains some apparently strange notions in Graves’ biography, which are inexplicable if the biography is taken as the only source of information about Hamilton and his family. In the biography all people around Hamilton seem to have been faithful members of the Established Church, which made it almost enigmatic why for instance Hamilton was baptised by Rev. Benjamin Mathias of Bethesda Chapel in Dublin, which was a Church of Ireland congregation yet Mathias was called a “dissenter”;¹²¹ why Archibald Hamilton Rowan’s son Sydney Hamilton Rowan (1789-1847), an “influential member of the Presbyterian church,” stood as a youthful ‘sponsor’ at Hamilton’s baptism;¹²² why Hamilton’s sisters Grace, Eliza and Sydney (1810-1889) at some time attended the Dublin “dissenter” school of the Misses Bithia (.. -1835) and Frances (.. -1825) Hincks, aunts of Edward Hincks,¹²³ and how one of Hamilton’s sisters, most likely Archianna (1815-1860), became “a devoted Calvinist.”¹²⁴

¹¹¹ [Graves 1882, 142], [Graves 1882, 259]

¹¹² [Swanwick et al. 1899, 59]. Robert Hutton and Mary Ann Guinin married in August 1779, which means that Hamilton’s mother Sarah, born in 1780, was their eldest child.

¹¹³ [Swanwick et al. 1899, 61], John Hutton.

¹¹⁴ They married in 1821, ‘The 3d instant, at Childwall Church, near Wavertree, Mr. Robert Hutton, of Summerhill, Dublin, to Caroline, youngest daughter of Peter Crompton, Esq. Eton-House, Lancashire.’ *Saunders’s Newsletter* of 06 February 1821. The advertisement leaves no doubt about who they were; the coach factory John Hutton & sons was at Summer-hill, Dublin, and before 1974 the south-west border of Lancashire was the river Mersey.

¹¹⁵ [Swanwick et al. 1899, 14, 16]. Philip Henry.

¹¹⁶ For having been Unitarian: the Misses Lawrence, the Hutton coach-builders, and the Cromptons.

¹¹⁷ [Weerden, van, 2017, 19 fn 43], and *History of Pudsey*, p. 254.

¹¹⁸ The father of William Drennan, Thomas Drennan (1696-1768), was a Presbyterian minister who held the ministry of the First Presbyterian Church in Belfast.

¹¹⁹ What further connected Drennan, Halliday and Bruce was that Halliday’s grandfather Samuel, Drennan’s father Thomas and Bruce were ministers at the First Presbyterian Church in Rosemary Street, Belfast. Both Drennan and Halliday seem to have been born in the manse at Rosemary Street.

¹²⁰ Elizabeth Jane née Stewart of Ballintoy. The Stewarts apparently were Presbyterian.

¹²¹ *The Evangelical magazine and missionary chronicle*, pp. 492, 493.

¹²² Weerden, A. van, Sydney Hamilton Rowan. Because of a letter written to Hamilton in 1835 by a Hamilton Rowan Graves assumed that it had been Archibald Hamilton Rowan [Graves 1882, 14]. Yet the letter mentions Hamilton’s knighthood; Rowan had died in 1834, the year before Hamilton was knighted.

¹²³ [Graves 1882, 141, 173], p. 542 of the *Selection of Reports and Papers of the House of Commons*. 3: Education. Bithia and Frances Hincks lived at 47 North Great George’s street where apparently also the school was.

¹²⁴ [Graves 1889, 112]. Sydney’s grave is at an Anglican Cemetery in New Zealand, which could mean that it was Archianna who became Calvinist. She was raised outside Dublin by her maternal relatives the Willey family [Graves 1885, 594], which may be the reason she is hardly mentioned in the biography. It is not known where she is buried; her name is on Hamilton’s headstone in St. Jerome, but the cemetery record does not show her name. Contrarily, Lady Hamilton’s name is not on the stone, but it is given in the record.

And there were other unexplained remarks in Graves biography, such as Hamilton having attended many dinner parties in his youth; Graves did not mention with whom Hamilton dined so often. Because of his decision for the biography, to focus on Hamilton's connections with important people but leaving the large Hutton family out, Hamilton's very active daily life, full of weddings and funerals, dinners and parties, can hardly be recognised. Only a hint here and there show that also later in life his family connections remained important, when from parts of sentences it can be concluded that the Hamiltons very often had visitors, amongst whom for instance cousins from Trim and from England.¹²⁵ Generally, such visits could last for days or even weeks, yet how often they visited each other, and how long these visits lasted, is not known.

What also becomes comprehensible is how the deeply religious and scientific Hamilton could effortlessly befriend so many different people; he was surrounded by a family with on the one side mainly Anglican family members, on the other side mainly nonconformist family members, and on both sides academics and non-academics. Immediately after meeting them Hamilton became friends with Wordsworth and Coleridge, both faithful members of the Established Church. He befriended Arabella Lawrence who was a Unitarian educationalist, and the nonconformist mathematician Augustus De Morgan whose religiously coloured jokes he enjoyed. He was able to retain his friendship with both Adare and Aubrey de Vere after their conversion to the Roman Catholic Church even though he was initially very upset, and during his religious searches in the early 1840s, which led him to High-Church and Low-Church until thereafter he called himself an Evangelical Anglican, he was never afraid to share his views on religious matters with anyone.¹²⁶

Even without accounting for his already growing fame,¹²⁷ the networks around him were so large that if Hamilton would at some dinners have spoken about his wish to become introduced to Coleridge, there was a fair chance that there would have been someone who knew someone who could introduce him. Yet Hamilton does not seem to have done anything of the sort, which may lead to the conclusion that at first he trusted that Wordsworth would introduce him, which he would have done had Coleridge not been ill, and after Wordsworth's rejection that, if Coleridge would be able to receive him, he would find someone in London who could introduce him.

2.4 The Lawrence sisters, Liverpool and the party

Hamilton indeed befriended Miss Arabella in 1825,¹²⁸ and it certainly is possible that that was on a visit to Maria Edgeworth; two of the Miss Lawrences had been introduced to her in 1820,¹²⁹ and according to Graves she held especially Arabella Lawrence in very high esteem.¹³⁰ But Hamilton, and his sister Eliza, may have met Arabella Lawrence already two years earlier, at the Dublin dinner party, as was inferred from a remark in a letter to their sister Grace.¹³¹

As mentioned earlier, from June 1827, waiting until he could move into Dunsink Observatory in Dublin, Hamilton had been travelling through Ireland and England. In August 1827 he wrote to Grace from Liverpool,

There are many things to interest and please in Liverpool. I have found out Mrs. Robert Hutton [Graves added: née Crompton] and her family, with whom I have been spending a little time, as also with the Misses Lawrence, some of whom had met Eliza in Dublin, and desire to be remembered to her. I have met others too whom I

¹²⁵ [Weerden, van, 2017, 19, 205, 239, 339].

¹²⁶ [Graves 1889, 44, 564], [Weerden, van, 2017, 405-408]

¹²⁷ For instance, from May 1828 until January 1829 George and Alfred Paget, sons of the [Marquess of Anglesey](#) (1768-1854), lived at the Observatory to be tutored by Hamilton [Graves 1882, 299, 307]. He became very well acquainted with the Marquess [Graves 1882, 423, 426].

¹²⁸ From the quote from the 1833 letter to Helen Bayly, see p. 6, it is obvious that their friendship started with Arabella's 'candour', which according to Graves happened in 1825, see p. 2.

¹²⁹ See p. 70 of [A memoir of Maria Edgeworth](#).

¹³⁰ [Graves 1882, 191]. Although Graves did not give first names there is no doubt that he wrote about Arabella, his next sentence starting with "this lady" having become Hamilton's friend. Also Maria Edgeworth does not give first names, but comparing Graves' page with p. 72 of Maria Edgeworth's *Memoir* it becomes obvious that she asked Arabella Lawrence to be governess to the children of the Duchess of Orleans.

¹³¹ Hamilton may have known the Lawrence sisters better than it appears at first sight from Graves' biography; in 1827 Hamilton gave three relatives of the Miss Lawrences a tour of the University, [Graves 1882, 223]. The Lawrence sisters also "made many inquiries" for Hamilton's "sisters, for aunt or rather cousin Mary [(1791/1792-1887)] and other Huttons, and for the Ellis family" [Graves 1882, 535], who lived in the neighbourhood of the Observatory. The Ellis family was acquainted with the De Vere family; the first time Hamilton met Ellen de Vere was in their home [Graves 1882, 470]. Hamilton and the Lawrence sisters must have shared many acquaintances.

was glad to see, especially Dr. Trail, a very pleasant person, who will bring me to see Noakes, a wonderful calculating boy. Mr. Shepherd, whom I met at the Cromptons, has given me an introduction to Roscoe, which I have not yet been able to present.¹³²

Hamilton's relative Caroline Hutton was apparently visiting her parents Peter and Mary Crompton at Eton House. The people Hamilton mentioned in this letter were Thomas Trail (1781-1862) and William Shepherd (1768-1847), and the man he could be introduced to was William Roscoe (1753-1831). Traill was a physician, Shepherd was a Unitarian minister and schoolmaster. Both men were members of a mainly Unitarian network around William Roscoe, called the 'Roscoe circle', which was active 'in politics, the arts, sciences, and education, and in the anti-slave trade movement.'¹³³ After the visit to the Cromptons it was easy for Hamilton to also visit the Misses Lawrence; they lived at The Grange, Gateacre, Little Woolton, only about two kilometres from the Cromptons.¹³⁴ It appears from Hamilton's letter that in Liverpool he met with influential Unitarians, and it shows again how common it was to give each other introductions.¹³⁵

It is not known when "some" of the Lawrence sisters were in Dublin because Hamilton did not give a year, but they may have been at the large party because not only was Sarah Lawrence governess at the Cromptons, the Cromptons also seem to have known the Lawrence family. From the letters by Samuel Coleridge's wife Sara née Fricker (1770-1845), it appeared that she, and perhaps also Coleridge, already knew the Misses Lawrence when they still lived in Birmingham. Sara Coleridge wrote that in the autumn of 1806, when Coleridge was travelling, she went with the children, Derwent (1800-1883) and Sara (1802-1852), to Liverpool where

we were met by Dr Crompton's carriage, and taken to Eton Hall, four miles out of Liverpool, where we stayed a fortnight, to the great happiness of Derwent and Sara. Thence we got to Birmingham, stayed a few days with the Misses Lawrence [etc.].¹³⁶

It is therefore very likely that also the Cromptons and the Lawrences already knew each other, if only from the stories of the Coleridges.

Shortly after Sara Coleridge's visit the Misses Lawrence moved to Liverpool where, in 1807, they not only started their school, but where Sarah also became governess with the Crompton family, which she remained to be for many years.¹³⁷ Having been born in 1793 Caroline Crompton was fourteen in 1807, and as the youngest daughter, Sarah Lawrence will also have been her governess. These close networks of families and friends make it easy to imagine that Caroline happily invited the Lawrence sisters to her large dinner party in Dublin.

3 Being invited to come to London

In her article, Ishikura wrote that "Hamilton might have tried to use all his intelligence relating to Coleridge," from which it can be concluded that she assumed that before going to London Hamilton was determined to find a way to become introduced to Coleridge. From her supposition that Hamilton visited the Lawrence sisters with the intention to procure an introduction, but without revealing his plan, it can further be concluded that she assumed that that was the best plan he could come up with.

To show that 'using all his intelligence' would hardly have led to trying to procure an introduction from Sarah Lawrence, first Hamilton's large family network was described.¹³⁸ Next to his already extensive scientific network which will be discussed hereafter, also rapidly growing

¹³² [Graves 1882, 259]. [Master Noakes](#), a [mental calculator](#). The lithograph was made that same year.

¹³³ [Thomas Stuart Traill](#), from 1819 Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, was a [physician](#) in Liverpool from 1803 until 1832, thereafter [professor](#) in medical jurisprudence in Edinburgh; the minister [William Shepherd](#) also was a politician and a writer, and together with his wife he ran a school at Gateacre; [William Roscoe](#), around whom the [Roscoe circle](#) was formed, founded the Liverpool Association for the Gradual Amelioration of Slavery.

¹³⁴ [From Eton House to The Grange](#).

¹³⁵ In 1829 Hamilton introduced his pupil Lord Adare to the astronomer John Herschel before he had even met Herschel in real life himself [Graves 1882, 409]. For Herschel and Hamilton see p. 16.

¹³⁶ [E Coleridge 1873, 8]

¹³⁷ [EH Coleridge 1895, 758]. She will not have been governess already when still living in Birmingham. Travelling was not easy; the railway between Liverpool and Birmingham only opened in 1833.

¹³⁸ As mentioned earlier, see footnote 83, Hamilton's local acquaintances have not been mentioned even though in any case some of them also had large and influential networks, such as for instance his friend [George Shirley Kiernan](#) (ca 1791-1845), a member of the Royal Irish Academy and one of the two [State Apothecaries](#).

around the here relevant time was his network of eminent friends, amongst whom were Maria Edgeworth, William Wordsworth, Lord Adare and his parents, the Dunravens from Adare, Lady Pamela Campbell née FitzGerald (1796-1869),¹³⁹ and Aubrey de Vere and his parents from Curragh Chase.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, during his two visits to Wordsworth, in 1827 and 1830, Hamilton was introduced to acquaintances of Wordsworth, amongst whom were people who also knew Coleridge directly. But he obviously would not pass Wordsworth over and ask one of them for an introduction.

Hamilton’s scientific network had already been growing from the time he was an undergraduate. In 1825 Hamilton wrote to Uncle James from the house of Cousin Arthur, “Henry Disney has just called on me, along with my old rival and friend, [Bartholomew] Lloyd. Henry says he has heard a report that I am elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy.”¹⁴¹ The general meetings were held in the evenings of the fourth Monday of every month, and Hamilton thus soon became acquainted with many of the Dublin “men of” science, polite literature and antiquities.¹⁴²

In December 1822 Hamilton had become acquainted with his predecessor at Dunsink Observatory John Brinkley (1763-1835),¹⁴³ and directly after his appointment as Royal Astronomer in 1827 he visited Thomas Romney Robinson (1792-1882) at Armagh Observatory. Both men were members of the Astronomical Society of London; Brinkley also was a Fellow of the Royal Society in London.¹⁴⁴ In 1828 John Herschel (1792-1871),¹⁴⁵ who then was president of the Astronomical Society,¹⁴⁶ asked Hamilton for permission to also propose him as a member, adding that “the Society will have just reason to be proud of your name.” In December 1828 Hamilton was indeed elected, with Captain Beaufort (1774-1857)¹⁴⁷ representing him in proxy.¹⁴⁸

And not only was Hamilton introduced to many eminent men and women, others were also introduced to him. For example, in 1829 Colonel Everest (1790-1866) was introduced to Hamilton by Captain Beaufort;¹⁴⁹ also these two men were Fellows of the Royal Society.

In October and November 1831 Hamilton received two letters from William Vernon Harcourt (1789-1871), one of the main founders of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which show how firmly established his name already was. In September 1831 the first meeting of the Association was held in York, and on 26 October Hamilton wrote about Harcourt’s first letter to Maria Edgeworth,

¹³⁹ [Lady Campbell](#) was a daughter of Lord [Edward FitzGerald](#) (1763-1798), the “most charismatic of the United Irish leaders.” Hamilton met Lady Campbell in 1827 during a visit to Armagh Observatory. In 1830 she became a close friend and one of his most important confidantes [[Graves 1882](#), 336, 359].

¹⁴⁰ That this network then already stretched out far and wide can be gleaned from a list of pictures of the large houses, mansions and castles Hamilton was born in, grew up in, made short or extended visits to, or dined and partied in before 1832, and it is not known whether this list is complete. [36 Lower Dominick Street](#), Dublin, it may not seem very large yet it also was not average, there are now ten apartments, nrs. 21-30, in what then was one four storey house; [St. Mary’s Abbey](#) or “the remains of [Talbot Castle](#)” in Trim; [Willow Park](#), Blackrock, Dublin; [Bellevue](#), Delgany, Wicklow; [Summerhill](#), Summerhill, Meath; [Edgeworthstown House](#), Edgeworthstown, Longford; [Blackcastle House](#), Navan, Meath; [Viceregal Lodge](#), Phoenix Park, Dublin; [Lowther Castle](#), Penrith, Cumbria; [Gosford Castle](#), Gosford, Armagh, which at the time Hamilton visited Lord Gosford was in the process of being built; the [Primate’s Palace](#) Armagh, Armagh; [Adare House](#), Adare, Limerick, choose in the [timeline](#) 1760s-1780s which is as Hamilton will have known it; [Rydal Mount](#), Ambleside, Lake District; [Curragh Chase](#), Curraghchase, Limerick [[Graves 1882](#), 1, 30 (84), 61, 159, 160, 161, 218, 287, 368, 370, 373, 374, 385, 455].

¹⁴¹ [[Graves 1882](#), 173]. Henry Purdon Disney (1806-1854) was one of Catherine Disney’s [younger brothers](#). Bartholomew Lloyd Jr. was Hamiltons aforementioned classmate, see footnote 107.

¹⁴² See chapter IV, [Meetings](#). The lists of members are given in the *Transactions*; in [v 14](#), 1825 when Hamilton became a member and therefore was not mentioned yet, and in [v 15](#), 1830 when he already was Royal Astronomer.

¹⁴³ [John Brinkley](#). Hamilton was [introduced to Brinkley](#) by George Kiernan. For Kiernan see footnote 138.

¹⁴⁴ [[Graves 1882](#), 124], [Thomas Romney Robinson](#). Brinkley was [elected Fellow](#) in 1803.

¹⁴⁵ Herschel was regarded as one of the [most important](#) people in nineteenth-century science.

¹⁴⁶ In 1831 the Society became the [Royal Astronomical Society](#). [Presidents](#) of the (Royal) Astronomical Society.

¹⁴⁷ [Francis Beaufort](#) was rear admiral of the Royal Navy, [hydrographer from 1829-1855](#), and creator of the Beaufort wind force scale. They may have met at Edgeworthstown; in 1798 Beaufort’s eldest sister, Frances Beaufort (1769-1865), had married Maria’s father Richard Edgeworth (1744-1817).

¹⁴⁸ [[Graves 1882](#), 298, 306-307]. The [membership](#) of the Astronomical Society might explain why he never became a member of the Royal Society even though in 1832 [Sir John Lubbock](#) wanted to propose him [[Graves 1882](#), 527-528]; perhaps he did not need it. Many mathematicians and astronomers [[Graves 1882](#), 422] were also members of the Astronomical Society; even though he mostly [published](#) in the journals of the Royal Irish Academy and was not a member of the Royal Society, he also published in their [Philosophical Transactions](#); and due to the very theoretical nature of his own investigations not travelling very often, from 1832 on whenever he could he did attend the annual meetings of the British Association, where he will have met about everyone he wanted to meet.

¹⁴⁹ [[Graves 1882](#), 367]. [George Everest](#), after whom the mountain is named, then was surveying the meridian arc from India to Nepal.

Have you any wish to see a York paper giving an account of the late scientific meeting at York? if so, I shall send one. I have been invited to become a member of the Sub-Committee of the British Association which so met, and of the Local Committee that is to be formed in Dublin; and I have thought it right to accept the invitation, though without much hope that I shall be useful.¹⁵⁰

On 19 October 1831 Hamilton had answered that he would consent to the requests.¹⁵¹

On 9 November Hamilton received a second letter from Harcourt,

One of the resolutions of the General Committee of our Association was to the following effect: “That the Vice-President of the Association at Cambridge be requested to use his utmost efforts to procure from some competent individual a Report on the progress of Mathematical Science during the year 1831-2, to be laid before the next meeting.” Having communicated this resolution to Professor Whewell, I have just received his answer, which is, that he does not know anyone so likely to execute a Report on the recent progress of Mathematics well, or to give it authority by his name, as Mr. Hamilton, if he will undertake it. I have therefore to request of you to confer this favour on the Association.¹⁵²

These letters show that by then Hamilton had so many London connections that there was not any need any more, if there ever was one, to procure an introduction from the Lawrence sisters.

And there was a colleague at Trinity College Dublin of whom Hamilton did not even know he knew Coleridge, but it again illustrates that even if, still in Dublin, Hamilton would have asked people around him at random he would probably have found someone who knew Coleridge. John Anster (1793-1867) did not play a role in Hamilton’s visiting Coleridge, yet he knew Coleridge well; in his last “scrawl” to Hamilton when he was in London Coleridge asked Hamilton,¹⁵³

Should you have the opportunity, do not forget to remember me with love, and earnest good wishes to Mr. Anster in Dublin.¹⁵⁴

But to show that when Hamilton decided to go to London he was also not at all in the determined mood which Ishikura seemed to suggest he was in, what happened before and during the London visit will be discussed.

3.1 Coleridge, Herschel, metaphysics and Ellen de Vere

While considering whether he would go to London, there were two people whom Hamilton especially would like to meet; Coleridge and John Herschel. The first time Coleridge appears in the biography in relation to Hamilton is in the description of 1829, when Graves mentioned that

the poets most often in [Hamilton’s] thoughts and conversation at this time were Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, and, among the elders, Milton.¹⁵⁵

Coleridge died in 1834, yet until his last years Hamilton would regularly read Coleridge’s work, and mention him in his correspondences.

The first time Herschel appears in the biography is in the description of 1827, when Graves relates that Hamilton’s ‘Theory of Systems of Rays’ having been read to the Royal Irish Academy in April, Herschel had called it “a powerful and elegant piece of analysis.”¹⁵⁶ In the summer

¹⁵⁰ [Graves 1882, 467]. William Vernon Harcourt.

¹⁵¹ In the published report of the first meeting Hamilton is indeed mentioned as a member of *both Committees*.

¹⁵² [Graves 1882, 483]. William Whewell (1794-1866) was a polymath and philosopher, who wrote on a very large number of subjects. Together with Herschel, he was one of the most influential people in science of that time.

¹⁵³ John Anster was admitted to the bar in 1824, he was a poet and the first translator of Faust into English. Aubrey de Vere knew him well and liked him very much [Graves 1885, 323], as did Hamilton later in life; Anster attended Hamilton’s ‘Feast of the Poets’ in 1858 [Graves 1889, 98]. For the “scrawl” see p. 24.

¹⁵⁴ [Graves 1882, 547]. Coleridge kept testimonies to the worth of his friends the Gillmans, and after his death another one by Anster was given in *The Gillmans of Highgate*.

¹⁵⁵ [Graves 1882, 321]

¹⁵⁶ [Graves 1882, 231], p. 582 of Herschel’s *Treatises on Physical Astronomy, Light and Sound*. For April 1827 see the *Note on the text*. As Hamilton wrote to Coleridge, the ‘Theory of Systems of Rays’ and its supplements was an “attempt to remould the geometry of light by establishing one uniform method for the solution of all the problems deduced from the contemplation of one central or characteristic relation” [Graves 1885, 37].

John Herschel and Charles Babbage, who were lifelong friends and both lived in London,¹⁵⁷ had been travelling in Ireland, and Herschel had wanted to visit Hamilton, but just at that time Hamilton was in England. Having returned home again, in October 1827 Hamilton started the correspondence with Herschel, which “continued nearly to the end of Hamilton’s life.”¹⁵⁸

On 29 December 1830 Herschel wrote to Hamilton,

I wish there were any hope of seeing you here. Does not some part of the year give you a respite from your duties in which you could pass a while among us? I quite long to make your personal acquaintance.

But, apparently from late in 1830, Hamilton was becoming disappointed by the near absence of metaphysics in science. On 29 December 1830 he sent Adare a “little diagram,” “to represent the ascending scale of human thought,”¹⁵⁹

Religion. Metaphysics. Mathematics and Poetry. Physics and Literature.

Because early in 1831 Hamilton seems to have been in otherwise good spirits,¹⁶⁰ it will have been this disappointment which made him answer Herschel on 4 January 1831,

I have verified my general theory by applying it to deduce your elegant formula for the spherical aberration of an infinitely thin lens in vacuo. [...] I can only be excused for proposing your perusal of it by the desire which all ardent persons have for sympathy, and the very little chance which there is of soon or often obtaining this sympathy, when the object of ardent love belongs to abstract Science. I look forward with great pleasure to visiting you at some future time; but besides that I have little leisure for leaving home, being bound to ten months’ residence in the course of the year, I have (I must own) much moral vis inertiae, and it is very hard to put me in motion.¹⁶¹

And to Wordsworth he wrote on 11 January 1831,

Herschel [...] renews in a very kind manner the expression of a wish to become personally acquainted with me, and to see me at his house. Of course I must, like all the world, go some time or other to London, and I should think it worth while to do so, if I were thereby to become acquainted with Herschel and Coleridge. But I do not look forward with any pleasure to mixing even for a short time in the miscellaneous society of London, literary or scientific. In general, I have come to dislike the excitement of society, except of persons whom I respect or love. When unhallowed by love or respect, social excitement seems to me, observing my own mind, to partake too much of vanity.¹⁶²

On 24 January 1831 Wordsworth answered,

You are interested about Mr. Coleridge; I saw him several times lately, and had long conversations with him. It grieves me to say that his constitution seems much broken up. I have heard that he has been worse since I saw him. His mind has lost none of its

¹⁵⁷ Herschel and Babbage. Herschel then lived at the [Observatory House](#) in Slough, about thirty-five kilometres from the centre of London; Babbage lived in [Dorset Street, Marylebone](#), London.

¹⁵⁸ [Graves 1882, 277-281]. For having travelled in England see p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ [Graves 1882, 416, 415]. An unsent letter to Coleridge gives some insight in Hamilton’s metaphysical contemplations about science, see [Graves 1882, 592-593].

¹⁶⁰ Wordsworth wrote on 24 January 1831, “I am glad to find from your letters that you are in such high spirits” [Graves 1882, 424].

¹⁶¹ [Graves 1882, 417]. Hamilton never seems to have had trouble to start working on his mathematics; his problem was to stop it [Weerden, van, 2017, 354], and that is what he will have called ‘putting himself in motion.’

¹⁶² [Graves 1882, 422]. Why Hamilton wanted to meet Coleridge do not have to be discussed here; a quote by Aubrey de Vere might suffice. “One night, while we stood beside his little domestic lake, Rydal, as it glistened in the beam of a low-hung moon, Wordsworth said, “I have known crowds of clever men, as everyone has; not a few of high abilities, and several of real genius; yet I have only seen one whom I should call wonderful – Coleridge.” He then added: “But I should not say that; for I have known one other man, a fellow-countryman of yours, who was wonderful also – Sir William Rowan Hamilton; and he was singularly like Coleridge” [Vere, de, 1897, 41].

vigour, but he is certainly in that state of bodily health that no one who knows him could feel justified in holding out the hope of even an introduction to him as an inducement for your visiting London. Much do I regret this, for you may pass your life without meeting a man of such commanding faculties.¹⁶³

In August 1831 Hamilton's disappointment about the state of science was further enhanced by a visit to the Observatory by George Biddell Airy (1801-1892); Hamilton wrote to Adare,

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway, he said, playfully perhaps, but, I think, sincerely, he considered as the highest achievement of man. Robinson has his faculties in better balance; Herschel better still. When shall we see an incarnation of metaphysical in physical science!¹⁶⁴

On 2 September 1831, when Hamilton was visiting the Dunravens at Adare, also Ellen de Vere, who lived at Curragh Chase, visited them. Talking with her about Coleridge's *Christabel*, poetry and astronomy restored Hamilton's 'tone of mind' and love for science and astronomy, the "mathematical spirit" having been "too strong and habitual [...] to be subdued for more than a moment."¹⁶⁵ Hamilton then fell in love with Ellen de Vere, and he was very happy.

3.2 In love, and an invitation from South

In the first half of September 1831 Hamilton was invited by the British astronomer James South (1785-1867) to come to London. South had been a chemist and a surgeon, but in 1816 he married Charlotte Ellis (.. -1851), through whose wealth he could give up surgery and focus on his love for astronomy. In the early 1820s working with John Herschel, they won gold medals from the Astronomical Society; South also won a gold medal from the Royal Society, and was knighted in 1831. In 1826 South had established a private observatory in Kensington, and in 1829 or 1830 he had bought one of the then largest lenses in existence.¹⁶⁶

On 14 September 1831 Hamilton wrote from Adare Manor, where he stayed with the Dunravens, to his sister Grace,

Has C[ousin] A[rthur] told you that I have had an invitation from Sir James South, to go in a few weeks to London, to see his great Equatorial put up by the Duke of Wellington, and that Adare and I intend to do so? I go, you know, to-morrow to Edgeworthstown, or to the nearest place on the canal:¹⁶⁷ but I trust that I shall be at the Observatory before I go to London and visit Coleridge and Herschel.¹⁶⁸

And on 18 September he wrote from Edgeworthstown to Adare,

Of course while we are in London we shall set aside some time for a visit to Herschel, who is indeed my second object, as Coleridge is my first.¹⁶⁹

On 29 October 1831 Hamilton asked Wordsworth for an introduction to Coleridge. In the second part of the following quote the honesty De Morgan wrote about can be seen again, just as in his letter to Arabella Lawrence. But now Hamilton even took the risk, probably small but still, of not receiving an introduction,

Notwithstanding the number of points of scientific and other interest connected with that great metropolis, my highest hope and inducement in visiting it was the prospect, or at least the chance, of seeing and listening to Coleridge. From something which I have heard to-day, I have reason think that the astronomical ceremony

¹⁶³ [Ishikura 2008, 65], [Graves 1882, 425]

¹⁶⁴ [Graves 1882, 444]

¹⁶⁵ [Graves 1882, 448, 459]

¹⁶⁶ [Graves 1882, 399], James South was a British Astronomer, one of the [founders](#) of the Astronomical Society. For buying the house and grounds in Kensington in 1826 see 'The [Observatory](#) of the Late Sir James South'.

¹⁶⁷ Hamilton greatly preferred travelling by boat.

¹⁶⁸ [Graves 1882, 455]. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852), had attended the Diocesan school in Trim, before Uncle James and Hamilton came to the school [Graves 1885, 700]. Anglesey, whose sons had been pupils of Hamilton, see footnote 127, had been second in command to the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo.

¹⁶⁹ [Graves 1882, 455, 458]

(the placing on its supports, by the Duke of Wellington, of a great Equatorial in the Observatory of Sir James South, at Kensington) will take place about the end of next month (November), and I still intend to be present, and still feel it as my chief inducement that by then visiting London I may have an opportunity of visiting Coleridge. I am aware indeed that illness may prevent his seeing me [...]. Perhaps, nay certainly, my chance would be greater than it is, if he knew of the intimacy with which you have favoured me. At the very moment when I am thus feeling in a new way the value of that intimacy, I must make a confession which will not indeed endanger its existence, but will show that (unfortunately for me) it does not at present extend to an entire agreement of opinion. The confession is that I am a Reformer [...]: – avowed, not as if it were worthy of the slightest consideration from you, but merely lest after the frequent allusions in your letters to the subject, respectful silence on my part might seem, to myself at least, like insincere assent.¹⁷⁰

On 22 November 1831 Wordsworth reacted to Hamilton’s ‘confession’ in unmistakable terms, and closed his reprimand, and therewith the letter, with a seemingly punitive “farewell”;¹⁷¹ Hamilton had indeed every reason to fear that he was endangering his friendship with Wordsworth. But on 11 November, already before receiving Wordsworth’s reply, Hamilton had written to him again, telling him that the London project was broken off because South had cancelled the event.

My London project is broken off for the present, the erection of the equatorial being postponed; and though that erection was far from being the principal pleasure which I expected, yet it was an external impulse necessary to overcome my inertia, and make me break away from home. I give up therefore, for the present, all hope of seeing Coleridge.”¹⁷²

In the aforementioned letter of 22 November 1831, before closing it with the reprimand, Wordsworth had already answered to this second letter,

Upon the whole, I am not sorry that your project of going to London at present is dropped. It would have grieved me had you been unfurnished with an introduction from me to Mr. Coleridge, yet I know not how I could have given you one – he is often so very unwell [...] that, unless I were assured he was something in his better way, I could not disturb him by the introduction of anyone. His most intimate friend is Mr. Green – a man of science and a distinguished surgeon; if to him you could procure an introduction, he would let you know the state of Coleridge’s health; and to Mr. Green whom I once saw, you might use my name, with a view to further your wish, if it were at all needful.¹⁷³

In her article Ishikura did not mention Wordsworth’s alternative, to become introduced to Joseph Henry Green (1791-1863). Yet this alternative, which contained the protection Coleridge will have needed when in very weak health, doubtlessly influenced Hamilton’s plans; Hamilton was known to be anxious about people who were unwell,¹⁷⁴ and therefore nevertheless trying to be introduced to Coleridge does not seem to fit in with Hamilton’s character. It is more likely

¹⁷⁰ [Graves 1882, 477-478]. In 1831, the English House of Commons passed a [Reform Bill](#), which would change the electoral system. It was rejected by the House of Lords. In 1832 the [Reform Act](#) and the [Irish Reform Act](#) did change the system.

¹⁷¹ [Graves 1882, 493]. Wordsworth wrote, “One word upon Reform in Parliament – a subject to which somewhat reluctantly you allude. You are a Reformer! are you an approver of the bill as rejected by the Lords [...]? [...] then I earnestly exhort you to devote hours and hours to the study of human nature, in books, in life, and in your own mind [...]. The Constitution of England, which seems about to be destroyed, offers to my mind the sublimest contemplation which the history of society and governments have ever presented to it [...]. Think about this, apply it to what we are threatened with, and farewell.” Graves may have left out the usual regards and “believe me &c.,” perhaps making the “farewell” seem harsher than it was meant to be.

¹⁷² [Graves 1882, 486]. Hamilton then still was happily in love with Ellen de Vere, again showing that he was not ‘inert’ because of melancholy; he was working hard on his ‘[Third Supplement](#)’ to the *Theory of Systems of Rays*.

¹⁷³ [Graves 1882, 492]. [Joseph Henry Green](#) was professor of anatomy from 1825 until 1851, professor of principles and practice of surgery from 1830 until 1836. From 1815 until 1836 he had a private surgical practice in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London. He became the literary executor of Coleridge, whom he seems to have met in 1817.

¹⁷⁴ See for instance [Graves 1885, 310].

that he took Wordsworth's advice so seriously that instead of finding someone to introduce him to Coleridge, he now should find someone to introduce him to Green. Although, as mentioned, there is not any indication that Hamilton was actively searching before he departed for London.

3.3 Becoming introduced to Green

Hamilton had been invited to come to London by John Herschel, who was a Fellow of the Royal Society since 1813, had been elected secretary in 1824, and had been president of the Astronomical Society from 1827-1829. Next to his own fame which had already preceded him, Hamilton knew that Herschel's network was enormous,¹⁷⁵ and as far as is known going to London without having taken further action, he will have trusted that in any case Herschel would get him introduced to almost anyone. But for the sake of argument it will be supposed that Hamilton, following Wordsworth's alternative to try to become introduced to Green, contemplated how to proceed after having reached London; knowing that he would be in London for three weeks, he would have about two weeks to procure an introduction to Green if there should be a week left in which he could visit Coleridge. With this in mind it is interesting to see what he could have done.

Joseph Henry Green was an anatomist and surgeon, since 1825 a Fellow of the Royal Society. There appear to be many direct and indirect connections between Hamilton and Green, the most direct ones being Captain Beaufort, who in 1829 had introduced Everest to Hamilton, and James South, the former surgeon turned astronomer, who invited Hamilton to come to Kensington.¹⁷⁶

In 1831 Joseph Green was elected as a member of the council of the Royal Society for 1832, and both Green and Captain Beaufort in 1832 for 1833; they will have known each other well.¹⁷⁷ James South had a good relationship with his half-brother John Flint South (1797-1882),¹⁷⁸ a "highly honoured" surgeon, who in turn was a life-long friend of Joseph Henry Green.¹⁷⁹ Of both men Hamilton could be certain that he would receive an introduction; next to giving each other introductions having been common, there was not any reason to suggest that Beaufort would first introduce Everest to him and then refuse to introduce him further, and the same holds for South, having found him important enough to invite him. It is not known if Hamilton knew that South had been a surgeon first, or that his half-brother was a friend of Green; having been found easily on the web, these examples serve to show how very many possibilities there will have been.

Then there were the physicians with whom Hamilton had dined in Belfast in 1826; William Halliday, the nephew and heir of the very well-known physician Alexander Haliday,¹⁸⁰ and the 'doyen' of Belfast medicine James MacDonnell. Also, the physician he had met during the 1827 visits in Liverpool to the Cromptons and the Miss Lawrences, Thomas Traill, whom he had called "a very pleasant person." All three men having stood at the top of their profession, they will have known many people in the medical world.¹⁸¹

Last but not least, in 1822 Hamilton's first cousin once removed Edward Hutton (1797-1865) had become a surgeon at the Richmond Hospital in Dublin as well as a physician, and he had become a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland in 1824.¹⁸² If Hamilton had wished to secure himself of an introduction beforehand, he could have asked in any case such a close relative if he could introduce him to Green, or to someone who knew Green.

¹⁷⁵ Brinkley, Herschel and South had already been presidents of the (Royal) [Astronomical Society](#) before Hamilton went to London.

¹⁷⁶ For Beaufort's introduction see p. 16. For Green being F.R.S. see [Fellows of the Royal Society](#).

¹⁷⁷ *Abstracts* of the papers in the Philosophical transactions, pp. 90, 158, Elected [Members of the Council](#).

¹⁷⁸ See for instance p. 568 of *The Correspondence of Michael Faraday*, vol III, South's 1842 [Letter to Faraday](#).

¹⁷⁹ [John Flint South](#). For having been called "highly honoured" see the biography of [John Keats](#).

¹⁸⁰ Alexander Haliday is described as a physician and a [public figure](#), see also p. 12 and footnote 106.

¹⁸¹ See pp. 20, 15. To judge how important they were is difficult, but easily finding their names on the web shows they were in any case no common doctors.

¹⁸² [Edward Hutton](#). Hutton would be directly involved with the first operation under anaesthesia in Ireland, on 1 January 1847 performed on [Mary Kane](#) (1828- ..) from near Drogheda, the first surgeon being [John MacDonnell](#), second son of the James MacDonnell at whose house in Belfast Hamilton had dined in 1826. Next to Edward Hutton, MacDonnell was assisted by [Richard Carmichael](#) (1779-1849), [Robert Adams](#) (1791-1875), and [John Hamilton](#) (1809-1875). In 1851 Hutton would also operate on Hamilton's daughter Helen who was anaesthetised; Hamilton then called Hutton a "skilful surgeon." [[Graves 1889](#), 369].

3.4 Rejection, and worried friends

Hamilton had made the plans to go to London while deeply in love with Ellen de Vere, something Wordsworth had known about. On 27 October 1831 he had written to Hamilton, “to speak frankly, you appear to be at least three-fourths gone in love; therefore, think about the last quarter in the journey.” But in the first week of December 1831 Ellen de Vere rejected Hamilton, and he became very depressed.¹⁸³

With losing all hope to marry Ellen de Vere also Hamilton’s disappointment about his “scientific brethren” returned in full force¹⁸⁴ although it had never really been away, Hamilton just had been happy because he was in love. In September 1831 he had written to Adare about Airy’s visit to the observatory and Ellen de Vere’s subsequent positive influence, yet again in a sonnet¹⁸⁵ composed on 14 November while still happily in love, Hamilton expressed this feeling. Having been rejected in December, in a letter written in February 1832 Hamilton told his then new friend Aubrey de Vere, a younger brother of Ellen de Vere, how painful it was,

The sonnet “Early within herself a solemn throne” gave no exaggerated expression of this feeling, but rather a faint and inadequate one. I differ from my great contemporaries, my “brother-band,” not in transient or accidental, but in essential and permanent things: in the whole spirit and view with which I study Science.”¹⁸⁶

Hamilton was working on his mathematics as he always could,¹⁸⁷ but he suffered from waves of melancholy. Towards the end of February or early in March 1832 Adare “determined to visit London in company with his friend Francis Goold [(1805-1848)].¹⁸⁸ He then wrote more than once urging Hamilton to join them.” Hamilton refused,

I could give you many fine reasons against it; but perhaps what most prevents me is that I am lazy and not in spirits, lying in bed half the day, and in the worst possible mood for making up my mind to set out on a journey to a place where, whenever I visit it, I expect to meet so much excitement of every kind. [...]. But [...] I hope to be in a more active mood whenever you make your next visit to London, and then perhaps we may go together.

Aubrey de Vere tried to persuade Hamilton to join Adare and Francis Goold after all. His letter came too late to be of influence yet it shows that Hamilton’s friends worried about him,

I am very sorry you dislike the idea of going to London with Adare: he told me he had written to ask you to accompany him there, and I had great hopes the change of scene and occupation would serve to deaden, though not destroy, the memory of your late painful feelings.”

Also Adare and his mother Lady Dunraven (1790-1870) were worried;

Urgent and affectionate pleadings from Lord Adare and Lady Dunraven, who were much distressed by the account he gave of himself, overcame the reluctance arising from his depression, and he resolved to make the exertion to which he was so kindly summoned.¹⁸⁹

In his state of mind, not only having to cope with the loss of Ellen de Vere but also with the loneliness he experienced because of the “painful repulsion” from his “brother-band,” Hamilton will have found enough solace in the idea of meeting with Coleridge and Herschel, and being reinvigorated by speaking with like minds, to decide to come to London with Adare and Goold.

¹⁸³ [Graves 1882, 474, 552]. Ellen de Vere is not mentioned in Ishikura’s article.

¹⁸⁴ The word ‘scientist’ was coined by William Whewell in 1833 at the meeting of the British Association in Cambridge, when Coleridge protested against calling men of science ‘natural philosophers.’

¹⁸⁵ [Graves 1882, 458, 490]

¹⁸⁶ [Graves 1882, 519]. The friendship with Aubrey de Vere, which Hamilton had ‘won from the wreck,’ started in December 1831 [Graves 1882, 511].

¹⁸⁷ Only twice Hamilton did not work on his mathematics; when Lady Hamilton was in England in 1841, being ill, and during a six-week correspondence with Catherine Disney in 1848.

¹⁸⁸ Francis Goold was a barrister who had entered Trinity College Dublin a year before Hamilton [Graves 1882, 318]. In 1837 Adare married his sister Augusta Goold (1810-1866). Goold published with Bartholomew Clifford Lloyd, the aforementioned classmate of Hamilton [Graves 1882, 157].

¹⁸⁹ [Graves 1882, 525, 511, 528, 533]

4 Liverpool, London, Coleridge and Science

They left Dublin on 14 March 1832 and arrived in Liverpool early the next morning. Later that day they went by train to Manchester to spend the night in a hotel, from where Hamilton wrote a letter to Eliza. The description in the quote starts early that morning, 15 March, in Liverpool, the day Hamilton visited the Miss Lawrences for the second time¹⁹⁰ and received the letter of introduction to Coleridge.

I left Lord Adare and Francis Goold to breakfast and amuse themselves, while I set out to walk to the Miss Lawrences'. They could not at the hotel direct me to their house, so I thought I would try the Post Office for information: and there, though I was too early to find the office open, I met a very civil groom [...] who knew where the Miss Lawrences lived, and gave me some useful directions. He thought they were only about three miles from Liverpool, which [...] determined me to walk, though for this I had perhaps a better reason in the cars not being yet on the stand. [...] I might have waited a little while, and probably would have done so, if I had known that the distance was really six miles instead of three.¹⁹¹ As it was, between many goings astray and disappointments as to the expected shortness of my walk, [...] I came to the gate at last. Many associations¹⁹² came on me at once, the proof sheets I had corrected in the walks, the poems I had thought of, the diagrams I had drawn on the ground. I found all the Miss Lawrences at home. [...] I had the pleasure of hearing many anecdotes of the early life of Coleridge, and of getting, what I had not all expected, a letter of introduction to him which may be very useful. It was from the eldest Miss Lawrence, who had known him when a young man. [...] As it was, after a substantial luncheon [...] I returned to Liverpool in a car with Miss Arabella Lawrence, and after visiting the Roscoes with her, I joined my party at the hotel, and soon we were on the railway which I see I have no room to describe, though it is really worthy of description.¹⁹³

It cannot be inferred from the letter whether Hamilton knew about Sarah Lawrence's friendship with Coleridge. Yet telling Hamilton anecdotes, and giving him the letter of introduction, might signify that he had been very open about his high hopes to meet with Coleridge in London.

It is also not known whether or to what extent Sarah Lawrence considered Coleridge's weak health, which was the reason Wordsworth did not want to give an introduction to Coleridge directly, only via Green. Perhaps she trusted that the people around Coleridge would protect him if he was not feeling well enough to receive Hamilton, or she may have warned her enthusiastic guest that he could be disappointed when he would present himself and was refused to see Coleridge. That would have been easier to do for her while talking to Hamilton face to face, than for Wordsworth only via correspondence.

4.1 Visiting Coleridge

Having reached London on 17 March 1832, on the 27th Hamilton wrote from his hotel a letter to De Vere in which he described how he was allowed to visit Coleridge.

We arrived in London on a Saturday night, and the next day I made my way to Coleridge [...]. Mrs. Gillman, the mistress of the house, told me that Coleridge had

¹⁹⁰ The first time was in 1827, see p. 3, the third time in June 1832, see p. 6.

¹⁹¹ The Misses Lawrence lived at Gateacre, which is indeed about [ten kilometres](#) from the city centre. It can be seen in the map that at Wavertree, where in a "shop for selling all things" Hamilton bought "sundry refreshments," he walked along the railroad, about which he wrote, "Attracted by two tall pillars, of which one was sending forth steam, [...] I saw to my great astonishment a part of the celebrated railway, no part of which I had seen before" [[Graves 1882](#), 534-535]. This was the Liverpool and Manchester railway, the world's first intercity railway, operated by steam locomotives.

¹⁹² He had visited the Miss Lawrences in 1827.

¹⁹³ [[Graves 1882](#), 533-535]. Travelling by train from Liverpool to Manchester only took [1 hour 46 minutes](#). Hamilton could therefore easily visit the Roscoes after luncheon and arrive at the Manchester Hotel the same day. He had received an introduction to William Roscoe in 1827, but then he had not made the visit, see p. 15. William Roscoe had died in 1831, the year before Hamilton visited "the Roscoes," apparently his family members.

been confined for some time to his room, and that she feared he could not see me during my present visit to London; however, she took up my card and a letter of introduction, which I had unexpectedly obtained at Liverpool, and she brought me word that he would see me on Tuesday [20 March] at four o'clock.¹⁹⁴

On 18 March 1832, the day on which Mrs. Gillman showed Coleridge Hamilton's letter of introduction, Coleridge wrote the earlier mentioned letter to Sarah Lawrence. He ended the letter writing,

I shall endeavour to see Mr. Hamilton. I doubt not his scientific attainments. I have the proofs of his taste and feeling as a poet – but believe me, my dear Miss L.! that should the cloud of distemper pass from over me, there needs no other passport to a cordial welcome from me than a line from you, importing that he or she possesses your esteem and regard, and that you wish I should show attention to them.¹⁹⁵

Coleridge did not trust that he read Miss Lawrence's address, The Grange, correctly, and decided to wait for Hamilton to acknowledge it. Coleridge therefore sent the letter after Hamilton's first visit, but Hamilton only read the letter, and made his transcription, when Sarah Lawrence showed it to him in June 1832.¹⁹⁶

Hamilton continued his letter to De Vere,

I accordingly had an interview in his bedroom, and was not at all disappointed. The interview lasted for an hour and a-half, during the last five minutes of which time his dinner was on the table. Another visit was fixed for Friday [23 March], and I saw him then for two hours. Both interviews interested me very much, but I shall not attempt to describe them, because I feel it almost an injury to the sense of grandeur and infinity with which the whole impressed me then, to try to recall the details now, even in my own mind and silently, much more aloud and to others. My scientific engagements having multiplied, and being more a matter of business, I did not ask for any third appointment with Coleridge, especially as after a visit to him I am too late for any dinner party; but I hope to see him once again before I return to Ireland.¹⁹⁷

It is not certain whether Hamilton saw Coleridge for a third time yet it is possible; he mentioned to Wordsworth that he had made "several visits" to Coleridge.¹⁹⁸ In the first week of April, while Hamilton still was in London, Coleridge and Hamilton did correspond,¹⁹⁹ and in the last letter Coleridge hoped that his "scrawl" would reach Hamilton in time to make it possible for him to visit his friend Joseph Green. Thus introduced by Coleridge Hamilton went to Green's house twice, and "was so fortunate as to find him at home on the last day of my being in London," as he later wrote to Coleridge.²⁰⁰

On 13 April 1832 Hamilton wrote to Wordsworth from Cambridge,

I took the opportunity of my being near Highgate, while in London, to make several visits to Coleridge, which did not disappoint my expectations. Mr. Coleridge received me in his bedroom, and expressed himself as having little hope of recovering, or indeed of living long; but in other respects he spoke with great animation, and, as you will easily believe, great eloquence. It was a pleasure to me, of a high and uncommon kind, to listen thus to the words of one from whose writings I consider myself to have derived so much of impulse and instruction."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁴ If Ishikura was right and Hamilton had planned the visit to the Lawrence sisters 'just' to procure an introduction, he would have been lying for a second time; first to Eliza, and now to Aubrey de Vere.

¹⁹⁵ See p. 3, [Graves 1882, 544-545], [EH Coleridge 1895, 758].

¹⁹⁶ [EH Coleridge 1895, 760], p. 6

¹⁹⁷ [Graves 1882, 538-539]. A drawing of Coleridge's room.

¹⁹⁸ See the quote from 13 April 1832. A third visit is also suggested by [Coburn et al. 2019, 278 fn 2], who conclude that if he visited Coleridge again, it was on 4 April.

¹⁹⁹ For Coleridge's three letters to Hamilton see [Graves 1882, 542-547].

²⁰⁰ [Graves 1882, 558]. Graves seems to have guessed the date of the "scrawl" as 6 April but that is hardly possible; they visited Greenwich on Thursday 5 April and left London on the 6th; not to find him at home the first time, but succeeding on "the last day," Coleridge's "scrawl" must have reached Hamilton in any case on the 5th.

²⁰¹ [Graves 1882, 552]

And on 25 June Wordsworth answered, Hamilton's letter from Cambridge having arrived only some days before,

It gives me much pleasure that you and Coleridge have met, and that you were not disappointed in the conversation of a man from whose writings you had previously drawn so much delight and improvement. He and my beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted, and they are now proceeding as it were *pari passu* along the path of sickness – I will not say towards the grave, but I trust towards a blessed immortality.

4.2 Again metaphysics and Ellen de Vere

Coleridge's "scrawl" also shows that Hamilton had talked with him about his disappointment concerning science and metaphysics; Coleridge wrote,

Be assured I have been comforted by the fact you have given me, that there are men of profound science who yet feel that Science, even in its most flourishing state, needs a Baptism, a Regeneration in Philosophy - so call it, if you refer to the subjective feeling - but if to the Object, then, spite of all the contempt squandered on poor Jacob Boehmen and Law - Theosophy.²⁰²

And Hamilton had not forgotten about Ellen de Vere either; in the letter to Aubrey de Vere of 27 March 1832 Hamilton remarked that he had procured an "autograph which I have sent to Lady De Vere." That Hamilton was alluding to Ellen de Vere and not to their mother Lady Mary de Vere née Rice (1788-1856), is known from a note, written by Hamilton in March 1856. His sister Eliza had died in 1851, and she had entrusted him with her "pet box" of letters; the box also contained letters written by Ellen de Vere to Eliza, which Hamilton now had read for the first time. In 1830 a sister of Ellen and Aubrey de Vere, Catherine Louisa (1818/1819-1830), had drowned in the river Shannon, and in 1831 Hamilton had been "commissioned" to procure, in Coleridge's own handwriting, a copy of his poem 'Elegy on an Infant'.²⁰³ In 1856 Hamilton wrote,

This word *commissioned* is too strong. I am not certain that I had even been requested by Miss De Vere to procure for her that particular autograph of Coleridge's; but remember perfectly well that she at Curragh, in 1831, expressed a wish to have such an autograph of that one short poem. On that wish I acted in 1832: but it was not till last year (1855) that I came by perusal of old letters, till then unread by me [...], to understand how deep the wish must have been on the part of the survivor of another sister who had been lost by drowning in her early girlhood, and whose "star-like loveliness" is so beautifully and touchingly described in one of those letters that I almost feel as if I had known her.²⁰⁴

4.3 A last meeting

Hamilton and Coleridge would meet once more; in June 1833 Hamilton visited the annual meeting of the British Association which was held in Cambridge, and on 29 June he wrote to Helen, whom he had married in April,

I have slipped away to my own rooms, to write you a few lines, after this busy and brilliant week of meeting. [...] On the day before yesterday [...] I spent the evening in company with Coleridge, whom I have thus enjoyed the very unexpected pleasure of meeting.

²⁰² [Graves 1882, 546], Jakob Böhme (1575-1624), William Law (1686-1761).

²⁰³ [Graves 1882, 539], [Graves 1889, 27]. In [Weerden, van, 2017, 110] I had written that it was Mary who had drowned yet the newspapers are clear; on Saturday 21 August 1830 the youngest De Vere daughter, Catherine, eleven years old, drowned in the river Shannon. A part of the confusion will have come from Burke who erroneously stated that even two of the De Vere daughters died very young, Mary in 1830, and Catherine in 1834. Yet De Vere obviously wrote about one deceased sister, [Graves 1889, 29].

²⁰⁴ [Graves 1882, 540]

Graves remarked that he could not find a record of that evening. But Coleridge must also have enjoyed Hamilton's company; on 30 June 1834 Adare was allowed almost an hour with Coleridge, and then wrote to Hamilton, whom Coleridge had promised to send a volume of Kant,²⁰⁵

I am so exceedingly obliged to you for the letter you were so kind as to give me for Coleridge. I took it to-day, and on inquiring if Mr. Coleridge was at home, I was told he had been ill and could not see anyone; but I begged the servant to take up the letter to him, and to my great delight he sent down to say he would see me – this I consider as a compliment to you. [...] He says he will get some one to look out for that work of Kant's for you. [...] I told him how you liked Kant, and how delighted you would be at hearing he (Coleridge) was about to publish another work. I must say, since I came to London I have not felt so happy as this day; [...] and I know not how to thank you for sending me the letter."

Coleridge indeed sent the Kant to Adare. He died very shortly thereafter, on 25 July 1834; Adare thus visited him less than a month before his death.²⁰⁶

4.4 Scientific and other meetings

The journey to England lasted for six weeks, and Hamilton and Adare were in London for three weeks. Already having been invited by South and Herschel, they knew beforehand that they would be invited to many parties.²⁰⁷ Adare was of course nobility, and Hamilton had already been talked about since he had earned two optime's at college when still an undergraduate, as De Morgan wrote to Lady Hamilton in 1865,

I heard of the extraordinary attainments of a very young student of Trinity College [Dublin], which were noised about at Cambridge. [...] I was thus led to watch Hamilton's career before I knew anything of him personally.²⁰⁸

Moreover, just before they had started on their journey to England, the mother of Ellen and Aubrey de Vere had sent Hamilton a letter of introduction to her brother Thomas Spring Rice (1790-1866), afterwards Lord Monteagle, a politician who lived in London.²⁰⁹ Hamilton indeed used his introduction soon after his arrival in London on 17 March, writing to De Vere in the letter of 27 March,

Mr. Rice [...] has in many [...] ways been very attentive and obliging. [...] I have seen some fine paintings, and have heard some good speaking in Parliament; being assisted in both by the kindness of Mr. Rice.²¹⁰

Hamilton's second inducement to go to London had been to meet Herschel, and in the same letter Hamilton wrote,

Adare and I have seen many of our scientific acquaintances and other men of science, especially at a great conversazione given by the Duke of Sussex on Saturday evening last [24 March]. We have met Sir John Herschel and Sir James South, and are invited to visit both.

²⁰⁵ [Graves 1885, 50, 52], [Graves 1882, 545]. On 4 April Coleridge wrote, "I have not been able in the wilderness of my books [...] as yet to find the first volume of Kant's *Miscellaneous Essays*. [...] But – have you misunderstood me? I have no translation, and am aware of none – or are you a reader of the German? If so, I trust that I shall, before you quit London, still succeed in rummaging out the two lost volumes. [...] With great respect, my dear sir, I remain your afflicted but respectful, &c."

²⁰⁶ [Graves 1885, 94-96]. According to Adare Coleridge "conversed with so much vigour and animation, though he had difficulty in speaking at all," he even was funny now and then, and made them laugh. And he told Adare about a book he was going to write, "on logic of some particular kind."

²⁰⁷ [Graves 1882, 539], p. 24. It is not known how long Gould accompanied them. As a barrister, he may have wanted to meet different people in London.

²⁰⁸ [Graves 1889, 216]

²⁰⁹ [Graves 1882, 529]. **Thomas Spring Rice**. It is possible that the letter was included in De Vere's letter, and therefore only reached Hamilton when he already was in London; in that case it did not influence earlier contemplations.

²¹⁰ [Graves 1882, 538, 539]

They indeed visited “Sir John and Lady Herschel” at his home in Slough, “stargazing by night, and talking by day,”²¹¹ and South at his Kensington Observatory; they breakfasted with Babbage, the only time Hamilton and Augustus De Morgan ever met even though they corresponded from 1841 until Hamilton’s death in 1865,²¹² and they saw Babbage’s “wonderful machine.”²¹³

In the letter to De Vere Hamilton had also mentioned that his “scientific engagements had multiplied;” they were apparently invited to very many gatherings and parties, being introduced by new acquaintances to their acquaintances. The list of names in Hamilton’s letters is already quite long but certainly not in any way complete, “having seen even more than we expected of scientific men and things.”²¹⁴ And as ‘the kindness’ of Mr. Rice shows, Hamilton did not only use his scientific network, but also his network of friends, making it perfectly reasonable to suggest that he would also have used his family network if that had been useful.

After leaving London on 6 April 1832 they went to Cambridge for a week to visit Airy, where they met Mrs. Somerville (1780-1872). John Herbert (1808-1882), who also was in Cambridge, wrote on 15 April to his friend Charles Darwin (1809-1882)²¹⁵ that Hamilton and Mrs. Somerville had “been lionizing here for the last week,”²¹⁶ and combining this apparently scoffing remark with the remark by Hamilton given below seems to show quite well how almost over the top also the three weeks in London will have been,

We have been nominally at Professor Airy’s Observatory, but really in a continual round of breakfasts, dinners and evening parties at the University, especially in Trinity College [Cambridge].²¹⁷

4.5 Aftermath

After the visit to Cambridge Adare wanted Hamilton to stay with him some more time,²¹⁸ and on 7 May 1832 Hamilton wrote to De Vere, alluding to Ellen de Vere,

We spent a week with the Hammers, and another in North Wales, where we saw much beautiful scenery, and took much bodily exercise, which assisted, no doubt, to restore me to vigour and cheerfulness. My heart even expanded to hope,²¹⁹ and some verses, which I shall send you with this letter, were written under the influence of that feeling. You need not be at pains to refute this hope, as if it were a logical deduction, and not rather a transient struggle, a hectic bloom, a momentary life, which, conscious of the absence of all outward aliment, and the array of all antagonist probability, died soon away. I have not, however, relapsed into that Trophonian state described in some earlier lines, which I shall also send you.²²⁰

The journey to London and Cambridge also did not restore Hamilton’s hopes about the state of science; in the same letter Hamilton wrote,

You will be glad to hear that I have returned to the Observatory in a better state of health of body and mind than that in which I left it, and in a mood more cheerful than that in which I wrote to you from London. My continued personal intercourse with the scientific men of England assisted certainly in producing this result. Whatsoever may be my own opinion respecting their habits of thought or of thoughtlessness on the subjects which interest me most, I could not see without pleasure and deep joy so many vigorous minds among my English fellow-countrymen engaged in

²¹¹ [Graves 1882, 552]

²¹² After Hamilton’s death De Morgan wrote to Lady Hamilton, “I met [Hamilton], about 1830, at Babbage’s breakfast-table, and there, for the only time in our lives, we conversed” [Graves 1889, 215].

²¹³ [Graves 1882, 550]. The “wonderful machine” was Babbage’s [Difference Engine](#). Remarkably, although De Morgan was not a member of the Royal Society, he was a [Fellow](#) of the Royal Astronomical Society.

²¹⁴ See p. 24, [Graves 1882, 539, 551].

²¹⁵ [Mary Somerville](#). [John Maurice Herbert](#) was a fellow student of [Charles Darwin](#) (1809-1882) and a [life-long friend](#).

²¹⁶ [Letter to Darwin](#), 15 April 1832.

²¹⁷ [Graves 1882, 552]

²¹⁸ Adare then was unable or forbidden to read because of a problem with his eyes.

²¹⁹ About marrying Ellen de Vere.

²²⁰ [Graves 1882, 554]. The Hammers were relatives of Adare.

researches of Science, and winning to themselves mansions above the earth, though beneath the highest heaven. Nor was it little to feel that I had provided myself against the hours of mourning over obscured Philosophy, and of regret that the champions of Science are not her champions also, with recollections of personal and friendly intercourse, of hands clasped in generous trust, and of sitting at table together. In some indeed, at least in Whewell at Cambridge, I thought with delight that I perceived a philosophical spirit more deep and true than I had dared to hope for. And among my personal gratifications, I could not but assign a high place to the pleasure of introducing my pupil [Adare] to so many eminent persons, and of finding him so well received.

Until the summer of 1832 Hamilton still suffered from fits of melancholy because of the loss of Ellen de Vere. But in the summer of 1832 he made a remarkable psychological discovery; he found how to cope with his feelings of melancholy, how not to live a “passion-wasted life.”²²¹ Hamilton regained his spirits, some weeks later feeling “as if my health of mind, and even of body were greatly improved,” and he never became so melancholic again for such a long time.²²² In October he discovered conical refraction for which he would be knighted in 1835, and in November 1832 he fell in love with Helena Maria Bayly from Bayly Farm, Nenagh, Tipperary, whom he knew from her visits to her sister, Hamilton’s neighbour and friend Mrs. Penelope Rathborne (1793-1845), and whom he would marry in April 1833.

5 Conclusions

Graves’ error of assuming that Hamilton’s friend Arabella Lawrence was the eldest Lawrence sister instead of the third, led Ishikura to the conclusion that Arabella was both a friend of Hamilton and of Coleridge. That led to her statement that Hamilton had thought up a scheme to procure an introduction to Coleridge from Miss Lawrence, after Wordsworth had rejected to give him one. Ishikura’s assumptions entailed a view on Hamilton as a determined, enthusiastic but perhaps not yet well-acquainted youngster who had set his mind on visiting Coleridge; as if he was a Coleridge-fan who did not have much choice for meeting with his idol other than through deceiving his friend Miss Lawrence.

In this article it was shown that Hamilton was a very truthful man, and that he had large networks of family, eminent friends and men of science through whom he could be introduced to almost anyone, including Coleridge. It was also shown that, contrary to the image Ishikura evoked of him, for Hamilton philosophy was not just passively reading and Coleridge not just an idol; befriending Wordsworth the moment he met him and being called by him ‘wonderful, like Coleridge,’ and Coleridge signing a letter to Hamilton “with great respect, my dear sir,” show that, together with his mathematics, Hamilton lived philosophy with all his intellect, and was recognised therein by both Wordsworth and Coleridge.

It was further shown that early in 1832 Hamilton was not in the determined mood Ishikura suggested; just having been rejected by Ellen de Vere and being depressed by the lack of philosophy in science, it is very unlikely that he would be so calmly scheming about something so important for him as visiting Coleridge. It then was shown that by the time Hamilton could bring himself to go to London he was so well-aware of his fame, that it is far more likely that he trusted that he would become introduced to Coleridge somehow, or to his friend Green whom Wordsworth had suggested as an alternative, as it was common practise to give each other introductions.

Taking all this together, it can be concluded with confidence that Hamilton visited Arabella Lawrence simply because he wanted to see his friend, and that the letter of introduction was indeed unexpected, just as he claimed it was.

A comparison between the shortness of Ishikura’s article and the length and density of this one further shows how easy it is to make an unproven suggestion which seemingly fits the data, and how difficult it is to refute such a remark. Hamilton’s entire networks had to be described to make it more than just plausible that Ishikura’s supposition is untenable, and even then it could not be proven to be wrong. Proving that someone did *not* do something, as is always the case with gossip, is indeed extremely difficult.

²²¹ [Weerden, van, 2017, 118-122]

²²² [Weerden, van, 2017, 4.3]

Hamilton's case does prove however that becoming the subject of severe gossip can happen to anyone, and that unless very much effort is given to such a case, the distorted narrative may never be rectified. That does not have to be a problem yet it can as well become detrimental; how the gossip will evolve and what the consequences are cannot be predicted. In Hamilton's case it is unfortunate that Ireland's greatest mathematician, instead of inspiring new generations to become mathematicians and scientists, has become laughing-stock,²²³ yet it is detrimental if children would be led to believe that it is possible to be alcoholic yet work on mathematics at the highest possible level, as Hamilton did.

Gossip studies are emerging, and it is to be hoped that finding ways to detect and treat gossip, fake news and propaganda will become a branch of science.²²⁴ In the case of historic biographies it would greatly alleviate the work if scientific tools for disproving earlier gossip could be used instead of having to produce very long lists of arguments and possible proofs, as is done in this article. It would be a significant contribution to the scientific aim of showing the subjects of historic biographies as truthfully as possible.

Ironically, some months after having visited Coleridge, Hamilton attended the second meeting of the British Association held in Oxford. At the meeting he was elected as a member of the Council together with, amongst others, Green and Traill.²²⁵ If that had happened some months earlier a large part of this article would have been superfluous, but no one can look into the future, not even a genius about whose life we now have such a clear overview.

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²²³ If it was not such a loss [this video](#) by A Capella Science would be funny.

²²⁴ For instance [M. Testori](#); T.D. Dores Cruz et al., An Integrative [Definition and Framework](#) to Study Gossip.

²²⁵ In the reports of the first and second meeting Thomas Stewart Traill's initials are given erroneously as [J.S](#) and [W.S](#); that it is the Dr. Traill whom Hamilton met in Liverpool can be seen by comparing the reports on magnetism, [1st report p. vi](#), and [2nd report p. 559](#), with p. 253 of '[Proving instruments credible](#)', about Traill's use of the Hansteen needle and magnetometer. Another error is that in both reports for Hamilton instead of [F.R.Ast. Soc.](#), as given in Airy's case, [F.R.S.](#) is given even though he was not a Fellow of the Royal Society.

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Appendix

The seven people from the two excerpts of Hamilton's 1823 and 1826 letters, about the dinner party in Dublin and his visit to Belfast, are Robert Hutton (1784-1870) and Caroline Hutton née Crompton (1793-1882), Edward Hincks (1792-1866), William Bruce (1757-1841), his daughters Emily (.. - ..) and Maria (.. -1857), and Sarah Drennan née Swanwick (1769- ca 1867) widow of William Drennan (1754-1820). Mentioned in this article but not in the excerpts are the Lawrence sisters, and Hamilton's first cousin once removed Edward Hutton (1797-1865). There are many ways to describe these family connections, but only some of them will be given here.

The first connections

As far as can be inferred from the Lawrence and Swanwick family tree, the first connections between the Lawrence, Swanwick, Hincks, Hutton, Bruce and Drennan families were made when in 1735 Elizabeth Lawrence (.. - ..) married Joseph Swanwick (1711-1769). Their son John Swanwick (1736-1810) married in 1763 Mary Hincks (1741-1822). One daughter of John and Mary, Mary Swanwick (1767-1864), married in 1788 an uncle of Hamilton's mother Sarah, Rev. Joseph Hutton (1765-1856); another daughter, Susannah (1769- ..), married in 1789 her [first cousin William Hincks](#) (1764-1845); a third daughter, Sarah Swanwick (1770-1867), married in 1800 William Drennan (1754-1820).

The Lawrence sisters

The first connections having started with Elizabeth Lawrence, also the Lawrence sisters were indeed related by marriage to the other families. The father of the Lawrence sisters, Nathaniel Lawrence (1715-1803), was a son of Thomas Lawrence (ca 1714-1802). Thomas was a son of [William Lawrence](#) (1674-1737), and a brother of Elizabeth Lawrence who married Joseph Swanwick. Their son John Swanwick (1736-1818) was the father of the Mary Swanwick who married Hamilton's grand-uncle Rev. Joseph Hutton.

Edward Hincks

The connection between Hamilton and Edward Hincks is through Mary Swanwick who married Joseph Hutton; her sister Susannah married their first cousin William Hincks. Susannah and William were cousins because Susannah was a daughter of John Swanwick who married Mary Hincks; Mary Hinck's brother was [Edward Hincks](#) (ca 1737-1772) who married [Bithia Dix](#) (ca 1740-1820), and William Hincks was their younger son. Their elder son was [Thomas Dix Hincks](#) (1767-1857)²²⁶ who [married in 1791](#) Ann Boulton (1767-1835), they were the parents of Edward Hincks. Another connection might be that John Hutton, another grand-uncle of Hamilton, married [Priscilla Dix](#). Yet although it seems obvious, a direct relationship between Priscilla Dix and Bithia Dix was not found.

William Bruce

William Bruce was one of Hamilton's grand-uncles, because he married Susannah Hutton (1763-after 1797), an aunt of Hamilton's mother Sarah. A family connection with the Hallidays, who also were mentioned in the excerpt of Hamilton's 1826 letter, was not found, yet William and Susannah Bruce did call a son Halliday (1789-1856); they may have been very good friends. Halliday Bruce's daughter Elizabeth married the astronomer John Couch Adams, something Graves mentioned in a footnote in the Hamilton family tree [[Graves 1882](#), xix].

Edward Hutton

As a son of Joseph Hutton and Mary Swanwick, especially Edward Hutton brought together all six families discussed here. On his father's side he was a grandson of Robert Hutton and Sarah Lewis, Hamilton's great-grandparents. On his mother's side he was a great-grandson of Elizabeth Lawrence who married Joseph Swanwick, and grandson of John Swanwick and Mary Hincks whose daughter Sarah Swanwick, Edward's aunt, married William Drennan. Later in life Edward would marry as his second wife Maria Bruce (.. -1857), daughter of William Bruce, and the Maria with whom Hamilton had travelled in Belfast.

²²⁶ The Ancestry website gives the year of birth of William Hincks as 1764, yet [Burke claims](#) that Thomas Dix Hincks, apparently [born in 1767](#), was the elder son and heir.